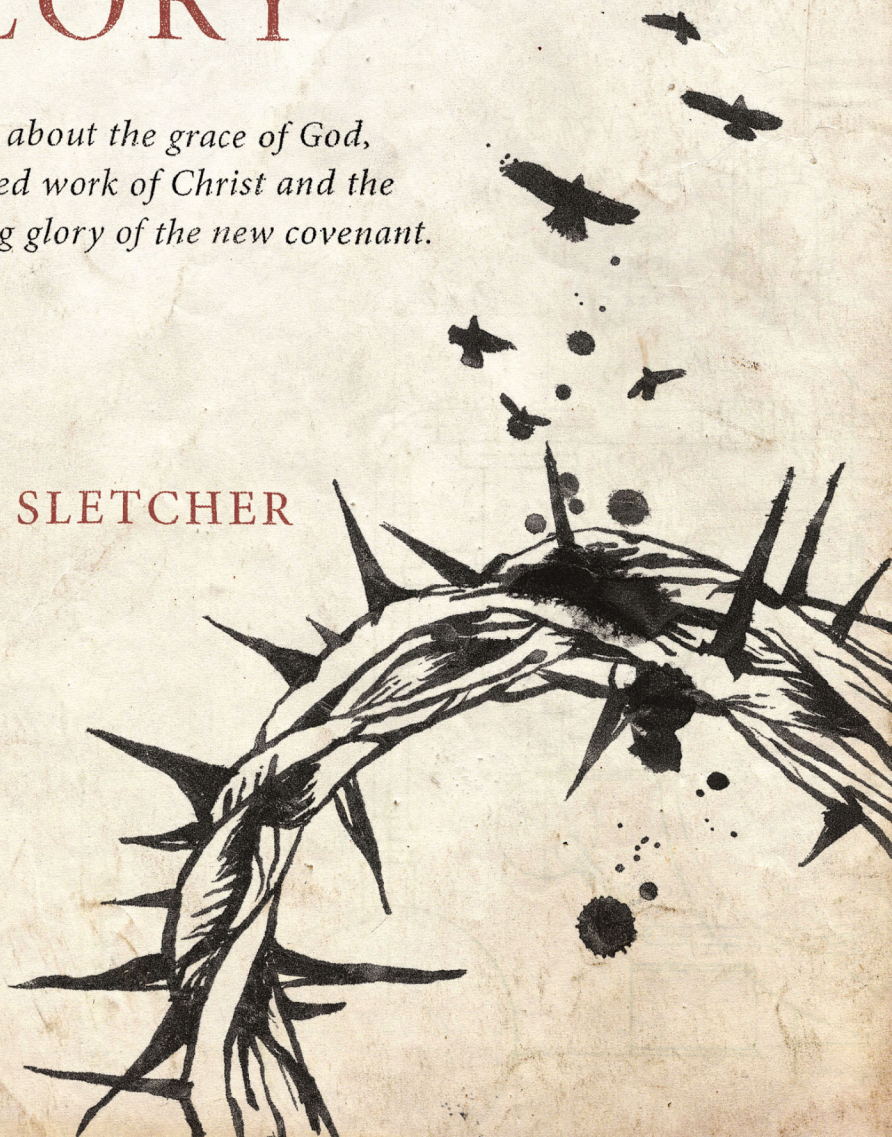


SURPASSING GLORY

*The truth about the grace of God,
the finished work of Christ and the
surpassing glory of the new covenant.*

RYAN SLETCHER



SURPASSING GLORY

Translation Index

- BBE – Bible in Basic English
- CEV – Contemporary English Version (Copyright 1995 by American Bible Society).
- DRB – Douay-Rheims Bible (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2007).
- ESV – English Standard Version (Copyright 2001, 2007 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers).
- ERV – Revised Version.
- GWT – God’s Word Translation (Copyright 1995 by Baker Publishing Group).
- ISV – International Standard Version (Yorba Linda, CA: Davidson Press, 1998).
- KJV – King James Version (Authorized King James Version)
- NASB – New American Standard Bible (Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation).
- NIV – New international Version (Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica).
- NKJV – New King James Version (Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.).
- NLT – New Living Translation (Copyright 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation).
- WBT – Wycliffe Bible Translators (2001 by Terence P. Noble).

All emphasis within scripture quotations is the author’s own.

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SURPASSING GLORY

*The truth about the grace of God,
the finished work of Christ
and the surpassing glory of the New Covenant*

RYAN SLETCHER

Dedication

I dedicate this book to those who are weary and heavy laden; trapped in bondage to sin and sickness and exhausted by the burden of religion. May the revelation contained in this book bring you the same degree of freedom that it has brought me.

*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,
and you will know the truth, and the truth will set
you free.*

John 8:31 – 32 (ESV)

Endorsements

I absolutely loved reading this book! Ryan has an amazing logic and clarity about the Gospel and communicates it very simply and thoroughly. This is a must-read for anybody who does not have a clear understanding of the finished work of Christ and all that it entails!

Cornel Marais

Founder of Charisma Ministries

Author of 'So You Think Your Mind Is Renewed?'

Very seldom in history do we find such a well researched, Word based book as Ryan Sletcher's Surpassing Glory, that is able to profile the finished work of Jesus Christ in such a simple, yet profound manner. This Life Bringing, Grace based work, is written in such a way as to appeal to all who pick it up, from theologian to casual reader.

Dr. Robbie Cairncross

Founder of Jesus Be Set Free TV & Ministries

Surpassing Glory is a timely book that points people to the absolute sufficiency of Christ. Ryan Sletcher challenges the traditions of men that have kept many Christians from experiencing true freedom and supernatural power in their lives. The book is simply written, but trust me, he leaves no stone unturned. Get ready to have your minds renewed to the reality of the New Covenant.

Joshua Tongol
Speaker and Missionary

Ryan Sletcher is part of a new breed of young writers keen to re-visit scripture through the finished work of the cross. His book will help you understand what makes the New Covenant new. Read it and you'll come away thanking Jesus afresh for His amazing love.

Paul Ellis
Founder of Escape To Reality

Ryan Sletcher has written one of the most solid, comprehensive, and life-altering books on the goodness of God through the work of Christ. I only wish this had been written sooner. It will save untold numbers of well-meaning Christians countless years of striving, seeking, and searching for the very

Christ who has promised to never leave or forsake us. I am honored to know the author not only as a dear friend, but also as a fellow warrior in the battle to change the face and expression of Christianity in this generation.

Ryan Rhoades

Founder of Revival Or Riots

Author of 'Why Revival Really Tarries'

Ryan is a friend who has always been passionate about the truth regarding the finished work of Christ. This book deals a deathly blow to traditional self-focused doctrines while pointing readers to the all sufficient work of Jesus on the cross.

Nathan Odell

Co-founder of The Finished Work Ministries

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INTRODUCTION

*During times of universal deceit, telling the truth
becomes a revolutionary act.*

GEORGE ORWELL

I believe that we are in the midst of one of the greatest reformatations in Church history. Increasing numbers of people are receiving a revelation of the grace of God and the finished work of Christ. As a result, we are seeing thousands of Christians stepping into the life of freedom and power that Jesus paid for on the cross.

The work of Jesus is the very centre of the Gospel; it is the core of Christianity. Jesus is not simply the narrow gate; He is the destination. He is the Alpha *and* the Omega. He is the beginning *and* the end. He is the substance of every miracle, and the source of our freedom. There is no greater revelation than Christ.

Though a huge shift has already started to occur, it is my conviction that the majority of the Church has never heard the true Gospel before. Calling what is preached today

“good news” is optimistic to say the least. Christianity has been, for the most part, repackaged as a religion and sold on the shelf alongside Buddhism, Hinduism and the like. The reality is simply that the true Gospel is too offensive for most people to handle.

For many, the idea of living life in a perpetual state of perfection, holiness and righteousness—absolutely free from sin—is nothing more than a future hope; something that can be attained only through the death of our physical bodies. The prospect of perfect union with Jesus is out of reach and the possibility of walking in supernatural power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons and perform various other miracles is reserved only for the lucky few whom God has chosen to anoint.

If this sounds like you, I would like to introduce you to the Gospel. The true Gospel shifts the focus from your insufficiency to the absolute sufficiency of Christ. What was impossible through your own efforts has now become your effortless reality through the efforts of Jesus.

Before you read any further, I encourage you to lay aside any preconceived notions that you have about the Gospel. What you are about to read will totally reformat your theology. Jesus Christ has set you free from human effort, sin and religion and released you into a life of indescribable love, ecstatic joy, breathtaking freedom, unstoppable power and uninterrupted union with a happy God.

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THE COVENANT OF GRACE

*The law justified no one and condemned the best of
us, but grace saves even the worst of us.*

JOSEPH PRINCE



I WAS 22 years old, saved for more than 11 years, on fire for Jesus and deeply depressed. I was consumed by an overwhelming desire to know God and do His will; but no matter how hard I tried, I constantly felt like a failure. I forced myself to pray for hours every day, endure brutal fasts, intense bible studies, and engage in relentless evangelism. I was doing everything that I knew to do, but it felt like the harder I tried, the further I drifted from God.

As my self-imposed list of requirements grew, so did my list of failures. Though I was trying my best to be a good Christian, I was painfully aware of the fact that I was letting God down. Over the years, my fear of disappointing God had become so intense that I would often remain in my home for months at a time so as to reduce my chances of failing Him.

To add to this my predicament; I was enslaved to sin and no amount of positive self-talk or will power was sufficient to free me. This, of course, added to my seemingly endless list of failures. I loved God with all of my heart, but the

“truth” seemed inescapable. I was a dirty sinner and would never be acceptable in the eyes of a holy God.

The “good news” that I believed did not feel too good. I didn’t know what needed to change, but I knew that I could not maintain my lifestyle much longer. The 11 years of struggling were starting to take their toll on me. *“Surely this is not what the Christian life is supposed to be like! Surely this is not the cost of salvation!”* I started examining the Bible in search of answers. I didn’t know it at the time, but this was the first step in my journey to discovering the true Gospel; The Good News that would ultimately set me free.

THE TRUE GOSPEL

My story may sound extreme to some, but I have found that most Christians have had a similar experience to some degree. In many branches of the Church, feelings of condemnation, struggles with sin, self imposed law, etc. Have become to be the norm rather than the exception. I believe that this is the direct result of the mainstream Christian message. The message that some Christians have labelled “the gospel” is, in reality, not good news at all. I am not saying that these Christians are not sincere, nor am I saying that they are not saved. **I am simply saying that they have not yet heard or understood the Good News of Jesus Christ.**

Jesus did not come simply to save you from hell and give you hope for a future life of victory. He came to give

you victory in your life now. It is commonly believed among Christians that it is necessary for us to physically die before we can experience total freedom from things like sin and sickness, but the truth is that Jesus died so that we could have this victory in our lives today!

The work of Jesus completely restored the relationship between God and man and transformed the very substance and nature of all who believe in Him. This is the glorious truth of the New Covenant! I am convinced that if the Church were to simply realize the magnitude of what Jesus has accomplished and the new reality in which they are living, the entire world would be in the midst of a blazing revival.

The confusion about the New Covenant has resulted in many well-meaning Christians around the world preaching an old-New Covenant cocktail, a mixture between law and grace. Consequently, many Christians are struggling with things like sin and condemnation, things that Jesus has already destroyed, and the miraculous has become the exception rather than the rule.

Understanding the New Covenant is imperative to understanding the Bible and its implications for our lives as Christians. When we read the Bible with an Old Covenant mindset, we are almost guaranteed to derive Old Covenant theology. This is evident when we look at today's popular Christian doctrine. A considerable portion of the teachings within popular Christianity are based on Old Covenant

understandings. Even the teachings that come out of the New Testament are generally steeped in Judaism. But we are not under the Old Covenant anymore. The New Covenant did not come to sit alongside the old. The new replaced the old completely. The writer of Hebrews put it like this:

For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another...

*...By calling this covenant “new,” **he has made the first one obsolete**; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.*

Hebrews 8:7 and 13 (NIV)

The New Covenant completely re-defined what “following God” looks like. The change is so dramatic that it affects every aspect of Christian doctrine and living. Bringing Old Covenant teachings into the New Covenant results in Christians behaving a lot more like Jews than followers of Jesus. The difference is this: The Old Covenant, which came through Moses, was one of law. The New Covenant, which came through Jesus, is one of grace.

*For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth** came through Jesus Christ.*

John 1:17 (ESV)

The law (Old Covenant) was not created so that men could become righteous. On the contrary, it was created

to show man that it is impossible to attain righteousness through human effort; the law *reveals* sin.

*Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.***

Romans 3:19-20 (NASB)

Furthermore, in addition to revealing sin, the law is the source of sin's power.

*The sting of death is sin, **and the power of sin is the law.***

1 Corinthians 15:56 (ESV)

*...But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; **for apart from the Law sin is dead.** I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, **sin became alive and I died.***

Romans 7:8 – 9 (NASB)

This is why Paul describes the Old Covenant as “the ministry of death and condemnation.” The law came so that mankind would realize that it is in desperate need of a Saviour, but grace came through our Saviour to set us free from sin and death. We are no longer under the ministry of death and condemnation; we are now under the ministry of

righteousness and the Spirit. I will say it again. We are no longer under law, we are now under grace . This is a fact that is spelt out in Romans.

...you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:14 (NASB)

The New Covenant is so far superior to the old that Paul says that the Old Covenant has no glory in light of the glory that surpasses it.

*But if the **ministry of death**, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the **ministry of the Spirit** fail to be even more with glory? For if the **ministry of condemnation** has glory, much more does the **ministry of righteousness** abound in glory. **For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it.***

2 Corinthians 3:7 – 10 (NASB)

THE NEW COVENANT FILTER

So when did this transition from law to grace take place? Matthew 1 may be the first chapter of the New Testament in our Bibles, but the New Covenant does not start with the birth of Jesus.

*But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, **born under the Law**, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

Galatians 4:4 – 5 (NASB)

Jesus was born under the law just like everybody else. The New Covenant was not established through His birth; rather, it was established through His death.

*For this reason He is the mediator of a New Covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. **For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.** For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. **Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood.***

Hebrews 9:15 – 18 (NASB)

This simply means that everything that took place before the cross happened under the Old Covenant, and every teaching that was taught before the cross was taught under the law. I am not saying that we are to disregard all teaching that occurred before the cross; I am saying that we need to change the lens through which we read scriptures. The Old Covenant lens was the law. The New Covenant lens

is the cross. Interpreting a biblical teaching without taking the cross into account leads to Old Covenant theology, which in turn results in death and condemnation. For us to rightly divide and apply the truth of scripture, we must filter it through the finished work of Jesus.

Sometimes this is obvious. For example, we don't sacrifice bulls and goats for the forgiveness of sin anymore, nor do we stone women who commit adultery. It is, however, sometimes less obvious. Jesus, for example, was primarily a law teacher while He was with us in the flesh, because most of His teachings took place before He died. As a result, everything that He taught must first touch the cross before it is applied to the New Covenant Church.

Jesus does on occasion hint at the New Covenant, and we are able to see a lot of New Covenant truth through His life, love, ministry, etc. But for the most part, He *taught* men under law, as a man under law. Here are some examples of Jesus' Old Covenant teachings:

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you...

Matthew 22:2 -3 (NIV)

In this passage, Jesus teaches His disciples to keep the law of Moses as instructed by the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. Under the New Covenant, we are no longer under the

law of Moses, because Jesus has fulfilled the law. This scripture is no longer directly applicable to New Covenant believers.

*For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.***

Matthew 6:14 (NASB)

In this passage, Jesus teaches that the forgiveness of our sins is conditional on our forgiveness of others. Under the New Covenant, we are forgiven unconditionally because of the sacrifice of Jesus. This, of course, does not mean that we don't forgive people anymore. The New Covenant has simply changed our motive.

Old Covenant:

*Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, **as we also have forgiven our debtors.***

Matthew 6:11 – 12 (NASB)

New Covenant:

*...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; **just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.***

Colossians 3:13 (NASB)

Under the Old Covenant, we forgive others *to be* forgiven. Under the New Covenant, we forgive others *because* we have been forgiven.

There are many such examples throughout the Gospels that can be confusing if we don't understand the context in which they were taught.

THE ORIGINAL GRACE PREACHER

Most of the Gospel is not found in the four books that we call “the Gospels.” These four books obviously depict the work of Jesus, but of the 89 chapters that make up the Gospels, 80 of them occur entirely before the cross. The Gospel is actually explained through the epistles; primarily the epistles of Paul. The apostle Paul may not have qualified for our prestigious red letters, but his words are the words of Jesus, nonetheless.

*I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, **I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.***

Galatians 1:11 – 12 (NIV)

When Jesus was under the Old Covenant, He preached primarily Old Covenant law. After His ascension, He appointed the apostle Paul as the one who would preach

New Covenant grace. Many of the New Testament writers were ministering primarily to Christians who were formerly Jewish. Paul, on the other hand, was chosen by God to preach to the Gentiles, for whom the “New Covenant” is the only covenant; law was never even offered to them. As a result, his message is pure New Covenant Gospel.

*Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, **that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable; sanctified by the Holy Spirit.***

Romans 15:15 – 16 (NKJV)

If you want to know what the New Covenant Gospel looks like, the words of Jesus through Paul would be a great place to start.

THE WINE OF THE NEW COVENANT

You can’t pour new wine into an old wine skin. If you do, the skin will burst and the wine will be spilt. The Church is trying to pour the wine of the Old Covenant into the wine skin of the New Covenant, resulting in Old Covenant Christianity—which is simply an altered form of Judaism. This principle can be easily illustrated with this simple

mathematical equation:

A little bit of *law* + a lot of *grace* = Law.

Paul puts it like this:

*Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. **And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.** You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

Galatians 5:2 – 4 (NASB)

You can't add law to your grace and come out looking like a New Covenant Christian. You can't mix the ministry of death and condemnation with the ministry of righteousness and the Spirit without completely deforming the Gospel.

It is time for us to trade in our Old Covenant wine so that we can drink the wine of the New Covenant.

NEW VS. OLD

Here is a short list of some key differences between the old and New Covenants. Some of them may shock or confuse you, but don't worry—I will address all of them in the coming chapters of this book.

Old Covenant Mindset	New Covenant Mindset
God's people are under law.	God's people are under grace.
The Holy Spirit convicts Christians of their sin.	The Holy Spirit convicts Christians of their righteousness.
God's people are sinners.	God's people are saints; holy, righteous and perfected.
God's people are slaves to sin.	God's people are slaves to righteousness.
God's people need to ask Him for forgiveness.	God's people are already forgiven.
God removes His presence from His people when they sin.	Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.
The focus is on self-sacrifice and human works.	The focus is on the sacrifice of Jesus and His work.
God's people do His work because they have to.	God's people do His work because they get to.
God's people are constantly crying out for "more".	God's people have already been given everything they will ever need.
God's people hunger and thirst for Him.	God's people are completely satisfied by Him.
God's people go to 'temples' to meet with Him.	God's people are His temple; in perfect union with Him.

Old Covenant Mindset	New Covenant Mindset
God's people are searching for an open heaven.	God's people are living under a permanent open heaven.
God's people pray for revival.	God's people live revival.
God destroys sinners on account of their sins.	God destroys sin in the body of Jesus so that sinners can be saved.
God's people follow signs and wonders.	Signs and wonders follow God's people.
God performs signs, wonders and miracles randomly when He feels like it.	Christians perform miracles whenever they want to through the power of the Holy Spirit.
God is in a bad mood.	God is in an outrageously good mood!

It is actually really easy to spot a true New Covenant teaching. You simply need to ask yourself the following: Does it point to what you need to do or does it point to what Jesus has done for you? Does it make you introspective or does it shift your focus to Christ? A true grace teaching will always point you to Jesus. Grace is not a theology or a doctrine; it is a person. There is no Grace without Mr. Grace; Jesus Christ.



THE NEW MAN

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

THE APOSTLE JOSEPH



DO YOU REMEMBER any of the New Testament letters being addressed to sinners? I don't. On the contrary, Paul addressed his letters to "the saints" which literally means "the holy ones".

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the **saints** in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 1:1 (NIV)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God in Corinth, together with all the **saints** throughout Achaia.*

2 Corinthians 1:1 (NIV)

*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the **saints** and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*

Colossians 1:1 – 2 (NASB)

As a matter of fact, the New Testament refers to believers as saints 63 times! While it is true that we were all once

sinners, this is no longer the case for the born-again believer. When you accepted Jesus, everything changed. You were transformed from sinners to saints; you were changed from sinful to holy.

The idea that Christians are still sinners is a major stronghold in the Church today and is responsible for a considerable amount of bondage and condemnation. If you are able to accept the revelation contained in the coming pages, you will find yourself effortlessly freed from the bondage of sin that many of us have tried so hard to break through our own efforts.

Prepare to step into the realm of effortless holiness, perfection and freedom from sin!

GNOMES, UNICORNS AND THE FLESH

It is important to note that the terms “sinful nature” and “the flesh” are both translations of the Greek word “sarx.” Almost every bible translation translates “sarx” as “flesh”. The only major bible translation that uses the term “sinful nature” is the NIV.

Paul makes it crystal clear throughout his letters: His message of total freedom from sin is one of the primary messages of the New Covenant and is foundational to the Gospel. Simply put, he says this: When Jesus died on the cross, our old, sinful self died with Him.

*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! **How shall we who died to sin still live in it?** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

*For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that **our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.***

Romans 6:1 - 7 (NASB)

Paul is not talking about some future event. His language is past tense when talking about our old man. He explains that our old man **died**. He **was** crucified with Christ and the body of sin **has been** done away with! Your old man has not been put to sleep, he is not in a coma and he did not contract a disease that is slowly killing him. He is **dead** and gone! Point being, dead people don't sin (verse 7).

Many well-meaning Christians have spent a lot of time trying to help me understand that we will only be free from sin when we die. The funny thing is that I agree completely.

The only difference is that I know that I have already died with Christ, and through that death, I have been set free from sin. Paul's message regarding the execution of our sinful nature is more common in the New Testament than most people think. He pushes this point in many of his letters.

*Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have **crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.*

Galatians 5:24 (NASB)

In Galatians 5:24, Paul reiterates this truth. Our flesh (sarx) has been executed. This time he adds that when it died, it took all of its passions and desires with it.

*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. **In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature**, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*

Colossians 2:9 - 12 (NIV)

This time, Paul uses a different picture to describe the removal of the sinful nature: Circumcision. Now, I don't want to get too graphic in regard to circumcision, but I will say this: When one is circumcised, nothing is left hanging

on. When Paul tells the Colossians that their sinful nature has been circumcised from them, he is saying that it has been totally removed!

The equally good news is that in addition to your old man dying in the likeness of Christ's death, a "new you" was raised in the likeness of His resurrection.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:8 – 11 (NASB)

In the same way that Jesus died to sin and now lives to God, you too have died to sin and now live to God. Romans 6 continues:

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience

*resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that **though you were** slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and **having been freed from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness.*

***For when you were** slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now **having been freed** from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*

Romans 6:14 - 18 and 20 - 22 (NASB)

Paul starts this passage by asking a question: “*Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?*” He then immediately answers it: “*May it never be!*” He goes on to explain his answer with the following argument. When we present ourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, we are slaves of the one whom we obey. If we present ourselves to sin, we are slaves to sin, and if we present ourselves to obedience, we are slaves to righteousness (verse 16). We cannot be slaves to both sin and righteousness, because they are in opposition to each other. To be a slave to one automatically means you are free from the other. We, as Christians, have been set free from our slavery to sin and have instead become enslaved to righteousness (verses 17 - 18). *How can we who are freed from slavery to sin and enslaved to righteousness present ourselves to sin? It is contrary to our nature.*

So what is the point? Our old man was completely enslaved to sin; compelled to do evil by his very nature. But that man has been crucified with Christ and through his death, our slavery to sin has ended! We are now new creations; absolutely void of sin and completely enslaved to righteousness! Under the Old Covenant, it was impossible for us to live without sin. Under the New Covenant, it is impossible for us to live without righteousness.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

I know that this is contrary to popular Christian doctrine, but our sin has not been covered by the blood of Jesus. Saying that our sin has been covered implies that we have sin to cover. This is, however, not the case. When Jesus died for us, an exchange was made—your sinfulness for His righteousness.

*He made Him who knew no sin to **be sin on our behalf**, so that we might become the **righteousness of God in Him**.*

2 Corinthians 5:1 (NASB)

Jesus took our sin upon Himself and in its place, He gave us His righteousness.

I am not saying that it is *impossible* for a Christian to sin. Nor am I saying that is *impossible* for a sinner to commit an

act of righteousness. It is obvious, both from scripture and from our life experience, that both scenarios are possible. What I am saying is that it is not the nature of a Christian to sin. Let me put it this way:

In the same way that you have the capacity to sin, you have the capacity to stoop down, pick up a handful of sand and pebbles and eat it for lunch. Totally possible, but when was the last time you did that? Do you wake up in the morning thinking, *I know that eating dirt is inevitable, but I really hope I don't do it today?* Of course not! In the same way, we should not have this concern regarding sin. Our old man who was controlled by sin has been executed, along with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24).

The Church was never intended to be sin-focused; it was intended to be Christ-focused. I believe that the New Covenant Church should have a similar mentality to those of Adam and Eve. When they walked with God in the Garden of Eden, their focus was completely on Him; they were blissfully unaware of sin. As Jeff Turner says: *“The purest form of worship is the enjoyment of life, in the context of union with God, without a consciousness of sin.”*

BIBLICAL CONSISTENCY

Often, when Christians hear this message for the first time, they immediately begin to defend the idea that we are still

sinners. Before we continue, I would like to point out a simple fact. If the New Testament says that you are a sinner, that you have a sinful nature or that you cannot be completely free from sin in this life, it is directly contradicting itself. Let us recap just a few of the verses that we have looked at in this chapter:

...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Romans 6:6 - 7 (NASB)

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:24 (NASB)

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ

Colossians 2:11 (NIV)

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:14 (NASB)

These passages are extremely clear with regards to our freedom from sin, the death of our old self and the removal of our sinful nature. These passages are either true or they are not. The Bible's message is either consistent, or it isn't.

With this in mind, let's examine the arguments that are commonly used to support the idea that Christians are still controlled by their old man and his sinful nature.

UNREAL RESURRECTION

“Yes, our old man and his sinful nature are dead, but we still have to war against him and put him to death every day.”

Surprisingly, this is one of the most common views that I encounter when sharing this message. Before I address it, I would like you to read it again and try to figure out the logic behind it. Does it make any sense at all? How can you put to death and war against something that is already dead? Your sinful nature is not taking a nap. He is **dead!** When Jesus commanded us to raise the dead, I'm pretty sure that he was not referring to your old man. But let's ignore the logic of the argument for now and take a look at the root of this belief. The idea that we need to war against our flesh comes primarily from Romans 7 and Galatians 5.

THE ROMANS 7 MAN

Romans 7:14 - 22 is a well-known passage in which Paul describes a conflict within himself between his desire uphold the law of God and the desires of his sinful nature.

This passage is frequently taken out of context and used to enforce a message opposite to the one intended by Paul.

By the time Paul gets to Romans 7:14, he has a cramp in his hand from writing “*our old sinful self is **dead** and we are no longer slaves to sin*” so many times in Romans 6. If we read this passage within the context of the letter, it is impossible to think that Paul is talking about his current state as a believer.

He starts Romans 7 by saying, “*For I speak to those of you who know the law.*” This is the audience that Paul is addressing in this chapter.

*Or do you not know, brethren (**for I am speaking to those who know the law**), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?*

Romans 7:1 (NASB)

What’s the point? You’re **dead**!

He goes on to draw a parallel between believers and Jesus and a woman and her husband.

For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

Romans 7:2 – 4 (NASB)

So the woman's actions are sinful while her husband is living and she is labelled an adulterer. But when her husband dies, even though she continues with the same actions, she is no longer sinning. Point being: You are **dead** to the law and have been joined to Christ.

*What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, **I would not have come to know sin except through the Law**; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “you shall not covet” But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; **for apart from the Law sin is dead**. I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, **sin became alive and I died**; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

*Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it **was** sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my*

death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

Romans 7:7 - 13 (NASB)

In verses 7 – 12 Paul talks about how sin is dead apart from law. In verse 13, Paul goes on to talk about the way that sin was producing death in him through the law, using ***past tense language***.

And now we get to the part where most people start reading. While reading the below passage, remember that Paul has just said that we have died to the law and have been joined to Christ; we are no longer under the law!

*For we know that the **law** is spiritual, but I am of flesh, **sold into bondage to sin**. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the **law**, confessing that the **law** is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

*I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. **For I joyfully concur with***

the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Romans 7:14 – 23 (NASB)

Wow, Paul! Where did that come from? Having read a bit of the context of this passage, do you find what he is saying a little odd? Let's compare a bit of this passage with what he said a few verses earlier.

Compare the following verses from chapter 7...

*For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, **sold into bondage to sin.***

Romans 7:14 (NASB)

*but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and **making me a prisoner of the law of sin** which is in my members.*

Romans 7:23 (NASB)

...with the following verses from chapter 6:

*knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we **would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.***

Romans 6:6 – 7 (NASB)

*But thanks be to God that though you **were** slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, **and having been freed from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness.*

Romans 6:17 – 18 (NASB)

*For sin shall not be master over you, for you are **not under law** but under grace.*

Romans 6:14 (NASB)

Throughout Romans 7:14 – 22, Paul is talking about his inability to live according to the law and his slavery to sin. This discussion comes after he spent a great deal of time explaining that he is no longer under the law and that he is free from sin. So then, is Paul just getting confused? Of course not! He is talking in first person about his life when he was still married to the law.

Remember the context of this verse? Paul is speaking to those who are under the law. Those who are under the law know what they should be doing because they have the commandments of God. The problem is that they are unable to fulfil the requirements of the law because their unregenerate self (the old man controlled by sin) desires what is contrary to the law. But under the New Covenant, we are no longer under the law and we are free from sin. This understanding of Romans 7 becomes inescapably clear in verses 24 and 25:

Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 7:24 – 25 (NLT)

Jesus is the one who set him free from that old self who was under law, sold into bondage to sin! The moment Paul accepted Christ, his slavery to sin was ended and he became a slave to righteousness.

THE GALATIANS 5 MAN

Galatians 5 is very similar to Romans 7. Though it is commonly used to teach people that they are enslaved to sin, when we read this verse in context, it is clear that Paul is teaching the exact opposite.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:16 - 23 (NASB)

Let's take this passage apart and see what is being said. Most people take it to mean that we have both a sinful nature and a righteous nature. I've heard it described as a black dog and a white dog that live within us. The dog we feed will win the war. This is, however, not at all what is being said. If those who hold to this interpretation would read up to verse 24 rather than stopping at verse 23, they would be far more likely to interpret this passage correctly.

*Now those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***

Galatians 5:24 (NASB)

Paul is saying the same thing he said in Romans 6. Your flesh is **dead!** If you are a Christian, "you have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." The flesh that is described in verses 16 – 21 is not present in you anymore. It has been killed and you have been set free from it. With that in mind, let's look at verses 16 – 21 again.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16 (NASB)

There are two forces discussed in this passage: the flesh (which is not present in those who belong to Christ;

Galatians 5:24, Romans 6:6 - 8, Colossians 2:20) and the Spirit. Paul then explains that if you walk by the Spirit, you will not gratify desires of the flesh. Why?

*For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.***

Galatians 5:17 - 18 (NASB)

The Spirit and the flesh are contrary to one another. They are in conflict so that you cannot do what you want to do. Does that sound familiar? I remember reading something like that in Romans 7. Paul is not saying that Christians have a dual nature. Did you notice the “but” at the beginning of verse 18? *The flesh and the Spirit desire what is contrary to one another, **but** you are not under law.* Again, he is describing the war that is present within someone who is under the law. This is why he says “walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh”.

Those who are under the law know what they ought to be doing, but because of their sinful nature and its desires, they are unable to do what they want to do. If you are a Christian, you need to understand that this sinful nature has been crucified (verse 24).

Yes, these two natures are in conflict with one another, but they are not both present in the born-again believer.

This is what Paul was talking about in Romans 6:14 - 22. They are in conflict, therefore you cannot be a slave to both. To be a slave to one is to be free from the other. The next section makes this point even more clear.

*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law, **The acts of the flesh** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. **But the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. **Against such things there is no law.***

Galatians 5:18 - 23 (NASB)

This passage is often read in church, but not many people know its context. The point is not to illustrate what we as Christians should avoid and what we should aspire to. The point is to show us the acts of somebody who is led by the flesh vs. the natural fruit of somebody who is led by the Spirit.

You are not under the law! The law is for the sinful, not the righteous (1 Timothy 1:8 - 9). The law is for those who produce the acts of the flesh, not those who produce the fruit of the Spirit. Paul was telling the Galatians that their flesh is dead, along with its passions and desires, and that they have been freed from slavery to sin.

Their old nature, which was under the law, produced “*sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.*” Their new nature, which is led by the Spirit, produces “*love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*” Immediately after Paul describes the works of the flesh vs. the fruit of the Spirit, he goes into Galatians 5:24:

*Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have **crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***

Galatians 5:24 (NASB)

Paul is saying that if you are a Christian, the nature and desires that produced the “acts of the flesh” have been crucified. How can you be led by the flesh and its desires if they are **dead** and gone? You only have one nature, a righteous one.

Paul puts it differently in some of his other letters:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; **the old has gone, the new has come!***

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

*Do not lie to one another, since you have put off **the old man with his deeds, and have put on the***

new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

Colossians 3:9 – 10 (NKJV)

Your house is not being haunted by your old, dead nature. Christ did not come just to cover your sin. He came to destroy sin at its root so that you would be free from it.

There is only one way for a believer to fall into a Romans 7 scenario, and that is for him to trust in his own ability to live a righteous life rather than trusting in the finished work of Christ. According to Titus 2:11 and Galatians 5:4, choosing law over grace separates you from the only thing that can free you from sin (More on this in Chapter 3).

IS THIS SELF-DECEPTION?

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

1 John 1:8 – 10 (NASB)

Yes, I am saying that Jesus has completely removed our sin from us. So what about this verse in 1 John? This is one of the first verses brought up when Christians hear this

message for the first time. But this verse, like every other, has a context. To understand what is being said, we cannot read it in isolation. John was not talking about the condition of a Christian. He was addressing Gnostics and Gnostic teachings that were leading the original recipients of this letter away from Jesus.

Gnosticism was essentially based on the belief that all physical matter was evil and that all spirit was good. Christian Gnostics believed that since matter was evil, God could not have really come in a human body. They believed that the physical incarnation of Jesus was an illusion, that He was actually a spirit with only the *appearance* of humanity. In this way, Christ could be a pure spiritual being in an evil world and not be contaminated by it.

We see John opposing this philosophy throughout his letter:

*We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, **whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands.** He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us.*

1 John 1:1 – 2 (NLT)

*This is the One who came by water **and blood**, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water **and with the blood**. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water **and the blood**; and the three are in agreement.*

1 John 5:6 – 8 (NASB)

From verse 1, John strongly emphasizes the fact that he and the others were eyewitnesses to the physical incarnation of Jesus, saying that they had seen Him with their own eyes and touched Him with their own hands. He also emphasizes that Jesus came by water, Spirit and the *blood*.

Further along in his letter, John directly condemns Gnostic philosophies, calling them anti-Christ teachings.

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ **has come in the flesh** is from God and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; **this is the spirit of the antichrist**, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.*

1 John 4:1 – 3 (NASB)

John also addresses another serious Gnostic teaching. Gnostics believed that sin was strictly a matter of flesh and

could not corrupt their spirit. As a result, they did not believe that they themselves were sinful. Not believing themselves to be sinful, they did not believe that Jesus came to pay the penalty of sin by His death on the cross. They believed that Jesus is only Saviour in that He provides “spiritual wholeness” by curing people of ignorance. This false teaching is what is being addressed in 1 John 1:8 – 10. When you understand the historical context of this letter, everything becomes clear, including John’s teaching concerning sin and confession. With this in mind, let’s take a second look at 1 John 1:8 – 10.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

1 John 1:8 – 10 (NASB)

John is not talking about Christians who believe that they have been set free from their old man and cleansed from all of their sin by the blood of Jesus. He is talking about Gnostics who claim to have no sin. If you don’t believe you have sin, how can you accept Jesus as your Saviour? When John says, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,*” he is talking about people coming to salvation. The first step toward being saved is to acknowledge that we are sinners

and that we need Jesus to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves: cleanse us from sin.

Still not convinced? Let's take a look at this verse within the context of the rest of the letter.

*Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and **in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.***

1 John 3:4 – 6 (NASB)

There is no sin in Jesus. That is why no one who is in Him sins. Just in case you are wondering, all Christians are in Jesus.

First, John says that if anyone claims to have no sin, they deceive themselves. Then he says that no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. So then are we supposed to not sin but say that we do? Or is John saying that none of us know God? The answer is “no” on both counts. He is now talking about a different group of people—Christians. This verse alone totally upends the popular interpretation of 1 John 1:8 – 10. But let's keep going.

*Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; **the one who practices sin is of the***

*devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, **to destroy the works of the devil.***

1 John 3:7 – 8 (NASB)

Firstly, Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil, which is sin. He was successful.

Secondly, there are many Christians running around teaching people that “*we are all just sinners, saved by grace. We all have a sinful nature and we will only stop sinning when we physically die.*” This is an interesting stance to have when you take 1 John 3:8 into account: “*the one who practices sin is of the devil.*”

John continues in verse 9:

*No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and **he cannot sin**, because he is born of God.*

1 John 3:9 (NASB)

Yes, it says the same thing in your Bible. With this in mind, is it even remotely possible that 1 John 1:8 - 10 was saying that sin is inevitable for the born-again believer? Absolutely not!

THE WORST OF ALL SINNERS

*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I **was** shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*

1 Timothy 1:15 - 16 (NIV)

In this verse, Paul calls himself a sinner. Knowing what we now know about Paul's message concerning sin, I hope this seems like an odd thing for him to say. Again, it is important to look at the context in which this verse is set. Let's start with 1 Timothy 1:8.

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

1 Timothy 1:8 – 11 (NIV)

Paul starts by talking about the law and how it exists not for righteous people, but for sinners. In this passage,

he immediately identifies two groups of people: righteous people and sinful people. He also explains that the law is not for the righteous. Note the fact that throughout his epistles, Paul frequently mentions that we are not under the law. Why? Because the law is not made for the righteous; it is made for the sinful.

He then gives us an outline of what these sinners look like. In short, he says that sinners are people who do things contrary to the Gospel that *he* has been entrusted with. With this in mind, which of the two groups would you say the Apostle falls into? Is Paul a sinner, under the law, doing what is contrary to the Gospel that he preaches? Or is he righteous?

*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. **Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.***

1 Timothy 1:12 – 14 (NIV)

In the next paragraph, he thanks Jesus for considering him faithful in spite of the fact that he *used to be* a serious sinner. He says that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor and a violent man. He continues to explain that he *was* shown

mercy because when he did these things, he was acting in ignorance and unbelief and that the grace of Jesus *was* poured out on him. Immediately after that, Paul goes into the verse that we are discussing.

*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**, of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I **was** shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*

1 Timothy 1:15 – 16 (NIV)

Paul says that Christ came to save sinners. Who are the sinners in question here? Sinners who need saving. That means the sinners being referred to in this passage are not yet believers. It is clear from both the verse itself and the literary context that Paul was talking about his former way of life, when he was a persecutor of the Church. Of all the sinners that Christ came to save, he was the worst! But the good news is that even Paul, the worst of sinners, was shown mercy (verses 13 and 16).

And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician,

*but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' **For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.***

Matthew 9:11 – 13 (ESV)

I affirm what Paul says. This is a trustworthy statement, worthy of full acceptance: Christ came to save sinners. And out of all the sinners that needed saving, I am the worst. But I thank God that He did save me and that He made me perfect, holy and righteous.



RENEWED REALITY

*If you believe that you are a sinner, you will
sin by faith.*

KRIS VALLOTTON



I AM SURE that most of us will agree that when God created Adam and Eve, He created them without a sinful nature. They were created in the image of God Himself, in whom there is no sin. In addition, when God had finished making them, His only comment was that they were very good. God could not have looked at sin and said that it was very good. They did not have a sinful nature, yet they sinned (Genesis 3:1 – 6).

How did they sin without a sinful nature? It's quite simple, really. Their battle was not against their flesh and blood, it was against spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12). They were not tempted to sin through their nature. The temptation came through the lies of the devil.

WHY DO CHRISTIANS SIN?

You may be wondering, “If Jesus has dealt with the issue of sin and has done away with our sinful nature, why do Christians still sin?” This is, of course, the crux of the matter.

There are two primary reasons that Christians continue to sin.

1. *They are trying to be justified by law.*

The first reason that many Christians continue to sin is that they are trying to be justified through their own efforts. This is one of the most prominent causes of bondage that Christians face today. I have already touched on this point briefly in chapter one of this book, but I believe that this is an issue that warrants further mention.

In 1 Corinthians 15:56, Paul explains that the power of sin is law! He reiterates this truth in Romans 7:8 – 9, saying that apart from the law, sin is dead. These are amazing statements. Law is literally the source of sin's power. When Christians attempt to justify themselves through their own works and efforts, they put themselves under the power of sin.

Many Christians are scared to preach grace, thinking that people will use it as a license to sin. Instead, they preach law—rules and regulations—concluding that doing so will teach other to live holy lives. In reality, preaching law does nothing more than trap Christians under the power of sin. No man is able to live a life free from sin by doing his best to keep the rules. The law does not teach us to say no to sin; as a matter of fact, it was given so that sin would increase (Galatians 5:20). Contrary to popular belief, it is the grace of God that teaches us to say no to sin.

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. **It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.***

Titus 2:11 (NIV)

So the power of sin is law and freedom from sin comes through grace. This is where things get interesting. In Galatians, Paul says something else that is pretty startling.

*You have been severed from Christ, **you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.***

Galatians 5:4 (NASB)

In this passage, Paul says that those who are trying to be justified by the law have been severed from Christ and have fallen from grace!

So what is the implication of this? When we rely on our own works for justification, we put ourselves under law which is the power of sin (1 Corinthians 15:56, Romans 7:8 - 9) and separate ourselves from grace (Galatians 5:4), which is the only thing that can set us free from sin (Titus 2:11 - 12). This is why Paul says this, in his letter to the Romans.

*For sin shall not be your master, **because** you are not under law, but under grace..*

Romans 6:14 (NIV)

There is a reason that sin will not be your master, and that reason is simple; You are not under law. You are under grace.

2. They believe that they are still sinners.

The second reason that many Christians continue to sin is that they believe that they are still sinners. It has been drilled into our heads over and over again: “*You are a sinner, you need to overcome your sinful nature and you need to war against your flesh,*” etc. Most Christians have been doing their utmost to stay away from sin, but despite their best efforts, they continue to slip up.

I have some good news for you: Your best efforts were never good enough to begin with. That is why Jesus died for you. It’s not about your best efforts anymore; It’s about the efforts of Christ. Because of Him, you never have to sin another day in your life.

Faith comes before the manifestation. Your life will manifest truth to the degree that you believe it. If you would like to heal the sick in Jesus name, you must first believe that divine healing is possible. It is obviously impossible to put faith into something that you do not believe. When we put faith into a lie, we empower that lie to become our reality. Before I continue, let me clarify this statement. Believing a lie does not make it true. Rather, it blinds us from the truth that would otherwise empower change. If you believe that

you are a sinner, you will empower that lie and remain in sin. If you believe the that you have been made righteous, you will empower that truth and live a life free from sin.

Let me put it this way: An apple tree does not become an apple tree when it has apples hanging off its branches. It has apples hanging off its branches because it is an apple tree. In the same way, we do not become righteous when we have righteous actions. Our righteousness actually has absolutely nothing to do with our actions; rather, it is our new reality through Jesus. Sinners have sinful actions because they are sinners. Righteous people have righteous actions because they are righteous. The “be” always becomes before the “do.”

So how do we become free from sin? It is simple: We realize that we already are. When you truly understand your new, God-given identity and the covenant of grace in which you reside, sin will naturally dry up. If you are battling with sin, you may simply lack revelation of your identity! This is what Paul is talking about in Ephesians 4.

*They [the Gentiles] having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. **You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful***

desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:19 – 24 (NIV)

Paul is talking to the Ephesians about the teaching that they received when they came to Christ. He says that they were taught to put off their old self and put on their new self; the ‘self’ who is like God in the areas of righteousness and holiness. How? By being renewed in the attitudes of their minds. In other words, when they came to Christ, they put on their new selves by changing the way they thought; by growing in the revelation of their identity.

You are not a sinner anymore!

We are so busy struggling against our imaginary flesh and blood that we have forgotten what Paul said to the Ephesians:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)

The devil has lied to us in an attempt to steal our identity and trap us in sin. He has most of us fighting against ourselves rather than fighting against him.

*So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and **the truth will set you free.**” They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”*

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:31 – 36 (ESV)

Read the above passage carefully. Those who sin are slaves to sin, but when you know the truth it will set you free! Jesus did not come to partially free you from the power of sin. *If the Son set’s you free, you will be free indeed!*

RESPONDING TO SIN

As I have already stated, it is not impossible to sin. It’s simply not your nature, and when you truly understand that, sin becomes highly improbable. But what is the correct response for a Christian who does sin?

Well, the most important thing to remember when responding to sin is that God has already forgiven you. God’s forgiveness does not come in instalments. You have been totally forgiven for all of your sins—past, present and

future. How do I know this? Two thousand years ago, Jesus took our sins from us. Two thousand years ago, all of our sins were future sins.

*When you **were** dead in your transgressions and the un-circumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, **having forgiven us all our transgressions**, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and **He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.***

Colossians 2:13 – 14 (NASB)

If Jesus died to atone for past sins only, no one after the cross could be forgiven. The author of Hebrews put it this way:

*...Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; **but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time**, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.*

Hebrews 11 – 14 (NASB)

Jesus does not have to die over and over for your sins as you commit them. Under the law, the Jews were constantly

sacrificing bulls and goats for the forgiveness of their sins. But Christ came to fulfil the law. He died *once* for *all*. Our sins have been removed from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). His sacrifice was payment enough for the sins of the entire world.

*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, **and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.***

1 John 2:1 – 2 (NIV)

Whenever somebody mentions that Jesus took away the sins of the entire world, people start throwing around the term “universalist.” A Universalist is somebody who believes that every person will be saved, regardless of whether or not they have accepted Jesus. I want to assure you that I am *not* a Universalist. Even though Jesus paid for the sins of the world, not everyone is saved. We still need to accept His payment in our place, and that is not something that everyone does. Let me put it this way; the work of Jesus was universal, but it is not universally accepted. The fact remains that Jesus has dealt with the issue of sin once and for all. Our forgiveness is not dependent upon our pleading, confessing, repenting or mourning. Forgiveness is given by grace, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, and it is received through faith.

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS

If all of our sins are forgiven, why do we still ask for forgiveness? Asking God to “forgive us our trespasses” is widely viewed as a foundational Christian practice. It is, however, no longer required under the New Covenant. When Jesus taught His disciples to ask God for forgiveness, they were still under the Old Covenant. He gave them this teaching before He had washed away their sins on the cross. To ask God for forgiveness is to disbelieve that He has already forgiven you. Why would you ask God to forgive you if you truly believe that He already has? Let me give you an example:

You have an argument with your best friend—let’s call him Mark—and say something hurtful to him in anger. After the argument, you part ways. Mark is really upset about what was said but before you even have a chance to talk to him, he comes to you and says, *“I totally, completely and unconditionally forgive you, my friend. It’s water under the bridge. We are 100% right with each other.”*

The next day you see Mark walking down the road. You are still feeling bad about what you said the day before, so you go up to him and say, *“Mark, please forgive me for what I said to you.”* He looks at you kindly and says, *“Don’t worry about it. I have already forgiven you, remember?”*

A few days later you see him again. Immediately you remember what you said to him and start to feel bad. You go

up to him and say, *“Mark, please forgive me for what I said to you.”* He looks a bit confused, but reassures you *“Like I said before; I have already forgiven you. Lets move on.”*

A week later you go to his place to hang out. While you are together, you remember the argument that you had with the prior week. Again, you start to feel bad.

“Mark, remember that argument that we had a while ago?”

“Yes... what about it?”

“I am really sorry about what I said. Please forgive me!”

This time Mark looks a bit annoyed.

“Seriously? I told you that I have forgiven you! What more do you want me to say?”

What do you think Mark’s reaction will be the sixth or seventh time you ask him for forgiveness? By going back to him over and over again, you are simply showing him that you do not believe that He has forgiven you.

How many thousands of times have we gone to God and begged Him to forgive us for the very sins that He dealt with on the cross? We even have corporate gatherings in which we cry out together, “Forgive us! Forgive us!” But God is saying, *“I have already forgiven you.”*

Faith thanks God for forgiveness; unbelief continues to ask for it.

TRUE CONFESSION

There is not a single verse in the Bible that indicates that we are only forgiven for sins once we have confessed them. Some people quote 1 John 1:9:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9 (NASB)

Since we now have more insight into this verse, we know that Paul was writing to early Gnostics who believed that they had never sinned. His point in this passage is simply that humans do have sin and are in need of forgiveness. Confession in an attempt to be forgiven is a subtle form of works. Forgiveness is not based on our ability to remember and confess sin. If it were, our memory could land us in a lot of trouble.

True confession is not an act on which our forgiveness is based. Rather, it is being real with our Father. We confess because we are forgiven, not in order to be forgiven.

This is what confession is supposed to look like:

“Dad, I messed up. I’m sorry...”

UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS

I have often heard preachers who teach this sort of conditional forgiveness go as far as saying that when you fall into sin, God removes His presence from you. That, my friends, is an Old Covenant teaching. Under the Old Covenant, God would lift His presence because of sin. Under the New Covenant you are joined to Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and He has promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you (Ephesians 1:13, Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 28:20). Sin does not have the power to separate God from you, but if you do not know that you have already been forgiven, you can allow sin to separate *you* from God, through self-imposed guilt and condemnation. These feelings are often mistaken for the conviction of the Spirit. But God is not convicting you of your sin anymore. He is convicting you of your righteousness.

The word convict means to find (a person) guilty. The Holy Spirit does not convict Christians of their sins. How can He? He doesn't even remember them anymore (Hebrews 8:12, 1 Corinthians 13:5).

*But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; **concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you***

no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

John 16:7 – 11 (NASB)

Jesus starts by saying that the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. He then explains these convictions in the next verse:

“...concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;”

The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin because they do not believe in Jesus. The conviction of sin is not for believers; it is for unbelievers!

“...and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you [the disciples] no longer see Me;”

Even though sin does grieve the Holy Spirit, the only conviction that the Church receives from Him is the conviction of their righteousness. If a believer sins, the Holy Spirit does not heap shame and guilt upon them. He reminds them of their true identity: *“You don’t have to sin anymore. You are holy! You are righteous! You are forgiven! You are free from sin!”* If you sin, you don’t have to run from God; you get to run to Him.

THE CORRECT RESPONSE

So then what is the correct response for a Christian who sins? The Bible tells us that we are to repent of sin. The

word “*repent*” does not imply crying and self-punishment, as many believe. It simply means “*to change your mind*.” If a Christian sins, the correct response is to change the way he thinks and to turn from the sin. Again, this is not a condition for forgiveness; rather, it is our response to the forgiveness that we have been freely given.

In summary, this is the way I believe Christians should respond to sin:

“Dad, I messed up, I’m sorry [confession]. Thank you that I am already forgiven because of Jesus. I turn away from that sin [repentance] because I am holy, righteous and cleansed through the finished work of Christ [agreement with the conviction of the Holy Spirit].”

And then we move on. Being depressed, beating yourself up, feeling condemned, and any other forms of self-punishment are simply attempts to carry the punishment yourself that Jesus has already carried for you. You have been washed, you have been sanctified, and you have been justified (1 Corinthians 6:11). You have been absolutely cleansed of all sin through the blood of Jesus, and God remembers your sins no more.

*Therefore there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 8:1 (NASB)



EFFORTLESS PERFECTION

*But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were
justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by
the Spirit of our God.*

THE APOSTLE PAUL



I AM SURE you have heard it said that as Christians, we are on a journey from sinfulness to holiness. Many use the word “*sanctification*” to describe this process. Their definition of sanctification is a life-long process in which we progressively become freer from sin and attain greater measures of holiness. The journey ultimately ends when our physical body dies and Jesus finally completes the process.

The problem with this is that the Bible says that we are already freed from sin and that we have already been made holy and righteous. Your holiness and righteousness have nothing to do with good works. They are free gifts from God, available to us through the work of Jesus.

*And by that will, we have **been made** holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Hebrews 10:10 (NIV)

*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the **righteousness of God in Him.***

2 Corinthians 5:1 (NASB)

*It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, **our righteousness, holiness and redemption.***

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NIV)

*...and to put on the new self, created after the **likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.***

Ephesians 4:24 (ESV)

If only the church would understand this revelation. The finished work of Jesus was enough! He has made you *completely* righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:24 does not say that our new self has been made similar to God in the areas of righteousness and holiness. It says that it has been made *in the likeness* of God in the areas of righteousness and holiness. We *are* the righteousness of God because of Jesus!

The Greek word for sanctify is *hagiazó*, which is translated as either “*sanctify*” or “*make holy*” in our English Bibles. *Hagiazó* does not describe a lifelong process of becoming progressively freer from sin. It simply means to be set apart. This “process” is an instantaneous part of salvation.

*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is **sanctified** by means of the word of God and prayer.*

1 Timothy 4:4 – 5 (NASB)

In this passage, Paul tells us that our food is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. If you had to progressively sanctify your bacon and egg over a lifetime, it would probably be pretty cold by the time it was sanctified enough to eat. The same word is used when referring to the sanctification of a Christian. As we are about to discover, the idea that sanctification is a process is absolutely absurd in light of the scriptures.

*And by that will we **have been sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Hebrews 10:10 (ESV)

*And by that will, we **have been made holy** through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Hebrews 10:10 (NIV)

You don't get much clearer than Hebrews 10:10. It says it outright: You **have been** sanctified/made holy through the offering of the body of Christ, once and for all! "Once for all" means that it happened **once** and for all!

*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who **have been sanctified** in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.*

1 Corinthians 1:2 (NASB)

*For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those **who are sanctified** all have one source.*

Hebrews 2:10 - 11 (ESV)

*And such were some of you. **But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

1 Corinthians 6:11 (ESV)

These passages are not that hard to understand. They are pretty clear with regard to sanctification. It has *already* happened! Some will try to separate justification from sanctification. They will argue that we have been justified in the eyes of God, but not sanctified. 1 Corinthians 6:11, however, has both justification and sanctification in the same verse, saying that they have **already** happened. You *were washed; you were sanctified; you were justified!*

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, **so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word**, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.*

Ephesians 5:25-27 (NASB)

Notice how Paul uses past tense when he talks about the sanctification of the Church. He *gave* Himself up so that the Church would be sanctified. He *has* cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.

*So Jesus also suffered outside the gate **in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.***

Hebrews 13:12 (ESV)

Jesus suffered and died so that the Church would be sanctified. To be perfectly honest, if you are trying to become sanctified through your own effort, you are practicing Judaism. Your sanctification is a gift received by faith.

*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them in the truth;** Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes **I sanctify Myself**, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.*

John 17:16 – 19 (NASB)

I would like to point out two keys to this passage. The first is that Jesus prayed this before His disciples had been sanctified through His sacrifice. The second is that Jesus sanctified Himself! Do you think He went through a long process of purging Himself from sin and putting to death a sinful nature? Of course not!

While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief

*priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among **those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.***

Acts 26:12-18 (NASB)

When Jesus Christ talks about His people, He says that they *have been* sanctified! He does not say that they are *being* sanctified or that they *will* be sanctified. According to Him, it is a done deal. It seems as if Jesus does not agree with the Church on this one.

These are just a few of the many verses in the Bible on the topic of sanctification. Over and over again the New Testament tells us that we have already been sanctified. How

is it that this do-it-yourself approach to Christianity has become so prevalent within the Church?

Let's look at some of the common arguments for progressive sanctification.

BEING SANCTIFIED

*And by that will **we have been sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering **he has perfected** for all time **those who are being sanctified**.*

Hebrews 10:10 – 14 (ESV)

Notice that verse 14 says that we are being sanctified. This verse is foundational to the progressive sanctification doctrine. By taking a closer look at this passage, you will discover that this interpretation of the verse makes no sense at all. To begin with, only four verses earlier it says that we *have been* sanctified. I guarantee you that the author did not change his mind between verse 10 and verse 14. This apparent shift is simply the result of poor English translation.

The Greek word that is translated as “*being sanctified*” in Hebrews 10:14 is the exact same word as is translated “*sanctified*” in Hebrews 10:10. The only difference is the tense. Hebrews 10:14 says “*sanctified*,” using present, passive tense language. There is nothing in the word that indicates a progression. *The word “being” is not included in the Greek at all!*

Here are some better translations of this verse:

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14 (NASB)

For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14 (KJV)

For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14 (ERV)

For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14 (WBT)

For by one oblation he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14 (DRB)

In addition, this verse says that He has perfected us. It does not say that He is busy cleaning us up bit by bit. He has already made us totally perfect.

TOTAL SANCTIFICATION

Another common teaching is that our spirit is sanctified and perfect, but our body is still sinful. This is just another Gnostic belief that has made its way into the Church. God has not dissected us and sanctified only certain parts. He has completely sanctified us through and through. What is interesting about this belief is that it is entirely based on a single verse.

*Now **may** the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NASB)

If Paul says, “*May God sanctify you completely,*” it implies that we are not completely sanctified, right? But once again, when we inspect this scripture properly, we will find that it says something very different.

First, the word “may” is not included in the original Greek. I am not saying that they have poorly translated a word from the Greek. I am saying that the word is not there at all! That is why many English translations, such as the King James Version, omit this word. Paul is not making a

request; he is making a statement. He is saying that the God of peace sanctifies you completely.

What is more is that the word “*sanctify*” in this passage is not using a tense which indicates a progression. It is in the “Aorist” tense, which means that it does not specify whether the word is progressive, repeated, instantaneous, accomplished or past. Paul is not saying “sanctified” in past, present, future or progressive tense. He is just saying “sanctify.”

The second half of this verse really cracks this false teaching right in the head.

*...and may your whole spirit and soul and body **be kept** blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

To say “*May you be kept blameless*” indicates that you have already been made blameless. You cannot preserve something that is not already there.

This is what Paul is saying in this verse:

The God of peace is the one who sanctifies you completely. May your entire being—spirit, soul and body—remain blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CLEANSE YOURSELF

Next, we have the “*clean yourself up*” doctrine. Apparently Jesus saves us, and then it is up to us to “*perfect our holiness.*” This belief was present in the Galatian Church and resulted

in them being rebuked by Paul (more on that later).

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

Many take this as an exhortation for us to clean up our dirty flesh and spirit. Let's investigate the context of this verse, starting in chapter 6.

***Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.** For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.*

*As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." Therefore, **"Come out from them and be separate,** says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

*Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, **let us purify ourselves from everything that***

contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1 (NIV)

This passage is not an exhortation to the Corinthians to clean up their dirty flesh and spirit. It is an exhortation for them to avoid being “yoked together with unbelievers.” Paul does not say, “Let us purify our contaminated body and spirit.” He says, “Let us purify ourselves from *everything that contaminates* body and spirit.” When Paul says this, it is clear from the context that he is talking about unbelievers.

There is, of course, a difference between being “yoked together” with an unbeliever and spending time with an unbeliever. Jesus frequently spent time with sinners, and so should we. Associating with sinners can never directly contaminate you. As a matter of fact, it is part of your job description.

STRIVING FOR PERFECTION

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Philippians 3:12 (ESV)

In this verse, Paul states that he has not yet been perfected. Again, this verse has been twisted and read out of context. Paul is not talking about his level of holiness or

sanctification. He is talking about his ultimate goal: to be conformed to Christ's death and to attain the resurrection from the dead.

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ**, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— **that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.***

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect**, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:7 – 14 (ESV)

Paul wants to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection. He wants to share His sufferings and become like Him in his death, so that by any means possible he

may attain the resurrection from the dead. He goes on to say that he has not yet attained this goal or been made “perfect,” but he presses on to lay hold of the goal.

What in this passage makes people think that Paul is talking about moral perfection or sanctification? He makes no reference to sin or holiness anywhere in this passage. He is not talking about his holiness; he is talking about his objective.

In addition, the word translated “*perfect*” in this passage simply means to accomplish or complete a mission. It is the Greek word “*teleioó*,” which has three primary definitions that are translated based on context:

1. As a course, a race, or the like: I complete, finish.
2. As of time or prediction: I accomplish.
3. I make perfect; pass: I am perfected.

Based on the context, which translation of this word do you think is most relevant?

The NIV translates this passage far more accurately.

*Not that I have already obtained all this, **or have already arrived at my goal**, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*

Philippians 3:12 (NIV)

Again, Paul is not talking about pressing on toward greater holiness. He is talking about pressing on toward his goal: to be killed and raised from the dead.

WHAT GOD HAS CALLED HOLY

*On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." Again a voice came to him a second time, **"What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."***

Acts 10:9 – 15 (NASB)

Just after this vision, Peter preaches the Gospel to the Gentiles, who were considered unclean by the Jewish people at the time.

Christians are quick to call themselves unclean and unholy in the name of humility. But God has cleansed us,

and what God has cleansed, we should no longer consider unholy. Let us stop resisting the Gospel and start enjoying our God-given righteousness and perfection.

If we were unable to escape the sinfulness that we inherited from Adam through acts of righteousness, why do we think that we are able escape the righteousness that we inherited from Christ through our acts of transgression? Our righteousness is part of our new identity; a gift that has been given to us for free. We did not earn it through our works and it can therefore never be lost because of our works; but when we understand our new identity, our righteousness will become visible through our works.

THE TRUTH ABOUT HUMILITY

Some say that the message that I preach (the Gospel) promotes pride in people because I claim that we are holy, righteous, perfect and complete. I find this interesting, as the very nature of my message negates pride. I am not saying that we are complete because we did something to earn it. I am saying that we are complete because of the work of Jesus. I am not boasting in my own works; I am boasting in the works of Christ. This accusation about the Gospel causing pride within people comes from a faulty understanding of humility.

False humility is a demonic ploy designed to rob the saints of their identity. True humility is not denying who

you are; it is acknowledging the source of who you are. You are holy because God made you holy. You are righteous because God made you righteous. You are perfect because God made you perfect.

Your identity is the result of the work of Christ; therefore, denying it is not some noble, selfless act. It is disregarding a mighty work of God! If anything, it is prideful to think that God's efforts to make you holy were somehow insufficient and that you need to help Him out by trying your best.

The devil's primary crime is identity theft. He knows that in order to enslave the Church and render her powerless, all he needs to do to is make her lose sight of who she is. A lie has power in your life to the degree that you believe it because it blinds you from the truth that would otherwise change you. If he can make you believe that you are a sinner, you will be enslaved to sin. If he can make you believe that you are not anointed, you will live a powerless life, etc. Your greatest weapon against the devil is the knowledge of your identity, which is found in the Word, not in our experience. If you do not know who God says you are, the devil will tell you who you are and you will believe him.

Kris Vallotton sums it up well in his book "The Supernatural Ways of Royalty."¹ In Chapter 9, he tells the following story to illustrate the point:

¹ Kris Vallotton. *The Supernatural Ways of Royalty*. (Destiny Image Publishers, Inc. 2006) 103-104

Recently I was leading a prophetic training session at a ministry school. We began the class by talking about the primary purpose of prophetic ministry and started to share that our first priority as a prophetic person is to find the treasure that God has hidden in the life of each and every person He has created. In the middle of telling them that we are to “discover and call out the greatness that the Lord had hidden in lives of people,” one of the pastors joined us from another room. I had never met him before and I was unaware at the time that he was a part of the leadership team. Before I could go on, he said, “I have a question for you.”

“Okay,” I responded. “What is it?”

“I think God is great,” he said.

“Yeah, and... Did I say something that made you think that I don’t believe that God is great?” I asked.

“You said that people are ‘great.’ I think you are teaching a doctrine that promotes pride in people by trying to discover the greatness that is in them,” he continued.

I was becoming just a little fried, so I responded, “I believe that religion emasculates and castrates people in the name of humility!”

We were sitting in a room that had a beautiful picture on the wall next to us. I pointed to the painting and said to him, “Let’s pretend that you were the artist that painted that picture.”

“Okay,” he said, looking a little uptight.

I motioned to the picture and yelled, “What a stupid-looking painting! Those colors are terrible! That thing is so ugly!” I paused for a minute. “Now,” I said to him, “does demeaning the painting somehow glorify the artist?”

“No!” he answered.

Now I had him cornered, so I continued, “Not only is God Himself the one who painted us, so to speak, but Jesus was the one who sat in the chair and modeled for the masterpiece! Remember, we were made in God’s image and in His likeness. We didn’t create ourselves. God created us. We are the work of His hands. When we tear ourselves down, we aren’t being humble; we are being stupid!”

He looked stunned. He said, “I have three theological degrees, yet I’ve never been taught this.”

Don’t let false humility rob you of your God-given identity. You are awesome because God made you awesome.

THE SOURCE OF THE TENSION

It has become extremely popular for Christians to build their theology around their experiences and traditions rather than around the word of God. When they encounter a verse in the Bible that does not fit in with their experience,

they will use their experience to re-interpret the verse. For example, one morning John reads Mark 16 in his Bible, which says:

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Mark 16:17 – 18 (ESV)

He thinks to himself, *Hmmm... I have been going to church for 18 years and I have never seen a believer lay hands on a sick person who then recovers... I have never seen anyone cast out a demon... I remember Bob from down the road who died from accidentally ingesting poison. He loved the Lord!? This passage can't be applicable to Christians in the twenty-first century. Supernatural abilities must have been given only to the early church to get it going.*

And voila: cessationism is born. (Cessationism is the belief that the gifts of the Spirit were only given for the establishing of the early Church and that they are no longer available today).

In this way, they use their experience to *interpret* scripture rather than using scripture to *create* their experience. This way of thinking has created a whole range of unbiblical teachings which are widely accepted throughout the church today.

Theologians often use “tensions” in an attempt to justify these unbiblical beliefs. Apparently everything is “held in tension.” We have everything, but we need more. We are holy, but we are also sinful. We are filled, but we are also hungry. It seems as if every time I turn around someone has invented a new tension in an attempt to explain away truth. There may be a couple of legitimate tensions within the Bible, but I estimate that more than 90% of the commonly taught tensions are between the Word of God and the traditions of men.

It is imperative that we get away from this way of thinking. If our experience is our final authority when it comes to discerning truth, our lives will never manifest the power of the Gospel. Faith comes before the manifestation. Just believe—the experience will follow.



THE END OF RELIGION

Religion emphasizes the importance of sacrifice, devotion, ritual, and how much people should do for God. Christianity emphasizes the importance of the sacrifice and work of Jesus Christ.

RYAN RHOADES



AWHILE AGO, the Lord spoke to me about the difference between Christianity and religion. In religion, people attempt to become right with God or a “god” through their own efforts. This is a common thread that runs through every religion that I have come across. Everything revolves around work and effort on the part of the human. Some religions require careful prayer meditation, others require strict obedience to certain rules and regulations, and some even require rigorous self-denial, such as fasting, separation from worldly pleasures and self-punishment.

True Christianity is different. While the world runs around trying to be reconciled to “god” through their efforts, the Church is effortlessly reconciled to God through the efforts of Jesus.

*Now all these things are from God, **who reconciled us to Himself through Christ** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

2 Corinthians 5:18 – 19 (NASB)

*For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, **and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself**, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*

Colossians 1:19 – 20 (NASB)

Religion is based on the work of man; Christianity is founded on the work of Christ. Jesus did not die for you so that He could become your religion. He died for you so that you could know Him. He is looking for lovers, not workers. Your relationship with God is no more a religion than your relationship with your parents or your spouse. Let me give you an example to illustrate what I am talking about.

Mark and Jessica get married. On their wedding night, after settling in to their hotel suite, Mark goes over to his suitcase and pulls out a sheet of paper. Jessica sits on the bed with a grin on her face, wondering what it could be. Mark walks over to her, looks deeply into her eyes, and then starts to read.

This is the way I expect my wife to behave:

- 1. I expect you to cook dinner for me every night.*
- 2. I expect my house to be clean and well maintained.*
- 3. I expect you to love me more than anyone else and put me first at all times...*

He continues this way through a list of 97 further requirements. Finally, he hands Jessica the paper and says, “*Memorize this. I don't want to have to speak again.*”

Sounds shocking, doesn't it? What kind of husband bases his relationship with his wife on her work? With a list of rules and regulations to uphold, it won't be long before Jessica becomes exhausted and starts to resent her husband. For most of us, it's hard to imagine a husband treating his wife in this way. But oddly enough, this is exactly the way most people think Jesus treats His bride, the Church. We seem to think that He has given us a list of requirements that we need to uphold in order to be in relationship with Him, that our relationship is somehow dependent on our ability to do what He wants. The key is this: If Jessica married a man who loved her without conditions or rules, she would have done everything on Mark's list automatically. Why? ***Because a lover will always outwork a worker.***

We work because we are loved, not in order to be loved. We serve because we are accepted, not in order to be accepted. There are still things to be done with Jesus. The difference is simple: Religion says, "*You have to;*" grace says, "*You get to.*" Our work for Jesus is an overflow of our love for Him. It takes a religious person to make Christianity into a religion. Religion is never initiated by God.

This error is not new. The Galatian Church had the same problem.

JESUS WORKED FOR YOU

Paul's letter to the Galatian Church was written to address an extreme error that had crept into their thinking. They were trying to be perfected through works. Paul explains that their efforts to become justified are the very things that alienate them from God.

Now, more than ever, the Church is trying to be perfected through works. At the beginning of this chapter I contrasted Christianity and religion and listed a few activities commonly required by various religions. It is interesting to note that all of the activities I listed are alive and well within the Christian Church today. Christianity has become an endless cycle of praying, fasting, studying, seeking, positioning, self-punishment, strict obedience to rules, and a whole plethora of other works in an attempt to become more holy, more anointed, closer to God, etc. We forget that everything that we have received from God is a gift, given because of God's grace. If you receive gifts because of your works, they are not gifts; they are wages.

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

Romans 4:4 - 5 (ESV)

We do not earn things from God through our works. We receive them freely from God because of the work of Jesus.

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

Galatians 2:21 (NASB)

If our works were sufficient to make us right with God, then Christ died for nothing. Every time we try to add something to the work of Christ, we nullify the grace of God. You are righteous and pleasing to God for one reason—the finished work of Christ. I believe that the idea that we can do something through our own efforts to make ourselves more holy, pleasing or acceptable is extremely offensive to God.

*You foolish Galatians! **Who has bewitched you?** Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: **Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?** Are you so foolish? **After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?***

Galatians 3:1 – 3 (NIV)

Paul was shocked that the Galatians would fall into such error. Are you so foolish that you think you can attain your goal through human efforts? Do you think you can be made holy and pleasing by keeping the law? You did not receive the Spirit because of your works; you received the Spirit because you believed what you heard!

*You who are trying to be justified by law **have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.***

Galatians 5:4 (NIV)

Your attempts at becoming more holy or deserving do nothing more than alienate you from Jesus and separate you from the grace of God. It is through the faith of Jesus that we are made holy, not through self-effort. The moment you do something in an attempt to become more holy, you have trusted in yourself for your own salvation rather than trusting in Christ.

I am convinced that this works-based mindset is responsible for the vast majority of the backsliding we see in the Church today. If your relationship with God is dependent upon your own works, it is easy to backslide because of your lack of consistency. But if your relationship with God is founded on the works of Christ, you will never backslide, because His work is finished and He never changes.

THE END TIMES DECEPTION

The Bible warns us in several places that in the last days there will be false teachings in the Church that will lead many people away from truth. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul describes these teachings as “*doctrines of demons*.” Sound familiar? Interestingly, the Bible actually describes exactly what this end-time’s deception will look like.

*But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to **deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons**, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, **men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods** which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.*

1 Timothy 4:1 – 3 (NASB)

Did you catch that? What are the false teachings founded on?

Again, Paul says in Colossians:

*See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, **according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.***

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the un-circumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven

us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

*Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by **delighting in self-abasement** and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.*

*If you have died with Christ to the **elementary principles of the world**, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the **commandments and teachings of men**? These are matters which have, to be sure, the **appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body**, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.*

Colossians 2:8 – 23 (NASB)

So then, what are these doctrines of demons and empty deceptions that will arise in the last days? Works-based Christianity and law; trying to be made right with God by observing rules such as “do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, do not marry,” etc. There are many deceptions in the church today, but none are as common or obvious as these.

So I want to exhort you, do not be taken captive by philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men and the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. Do not believe the doctrines of the devil! Your righteousness is a free gift from Christ! Do not let anyone rob you of your prize by subjecting you to man-made religion and law. You have been set free from these things. Let us put aside our striving. It is time for us to enjoy our freedom.

DEAD WORKS

Many of those who teach do-it-yourself Christianity are not even aware of what they are teaching, since they are simply re-teaching what they have been taught. Moreover, these teachings seldom come in an overt way. They are generally very subtle and well-disguised, carrying the appearance of wisdom. As a result, many Christians have bought into a human-effort/law theology without even knowing it. In this section I am going to address some of the more common dead works within the Church today. My intention is not to give you a comprehensive list of all of these works. Rather, my

aim is to show you what they look like so that you will be able to identify them yourself.

Before we begin, it is necessary for me to tell you that not all of the works that I am going to mention are intrinsically wrong. Most of the time, it is the motivation behind the action that determines whether it is living or dead.

*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, **but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.** If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, **but do not have love, I am nothing.** And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, **but do not have love, it profits me nothing.***

1 Corinthians 13:1 – 3 (NASB)

In other words, the action is of no value to you if it is wrongly motivated. God is a lot more interested in your motives than He is in your actions.

SEEKING THE LORD

Seeking is a pre-Christian activity. How can you seek someone who has already been found? After you found God (or were found by Him), He didn't leave you again. Remember? He is with you always. He will never leave you

nor forsake you. God is not hiding away. He has told you exactly where He is: inside of you.

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6 (NASB)

This passage is not telling us that we as Christians need to seek God so that we can be rewarded. It is telling us that we cannot please God without faith. Why? Because we need to have faith in order to come to Him. How can we come to God if we don't believe that He exists?

Bible says "seek and you will find" (Matthew 7:7). Some Christians, however, spend their whole life seeking God but never being satisfied that they have found Him. The Christian life is not one of seeking and never finding. In fact, the Christian life begins the moment the seeking ends! If you are a Christian, your seeking days are over because you have come to God through faith. All that is left to do is enjoy your reward - your perfect union with Him.

Some may argue that it is good for us to invest in our relationship with God, and I totally agree. But there is a big difference between looking for God and investing in our relationship with Him. If a married man were to spend all his time looking around the house for his wife, ignoring the fact that she was walking around with him, it would

not benefit their relationship at all. The same applies to our relationship with our heavenly Father.

The search is over. God is with you. The best way to invest in your relationship with Him is simply to enjoy your uninterrupted union.

FASTING

The modern church loves to fast for spiritual gain. We think that if we fast enough, God will finally “hear from Heaven” and be compelled to answer our prayers. We fast for power, we fast for breakthrough, we fast for answers, we fast for our nation, we fast for our family, we fast for forgiveness, etc. I know I am sounding like a broken record by now, but I say it again: Your efforts can never get you anything from God! Your prayers are not answered because you mix them with fasting. We are able to receive from God through Christ alone.

Fasting for answered prayers

*In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; **ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.***

John 16:23 – 24 (NASB)

In this verse, Jesus tells His disciples that if they ask the Father for anything in His name, they will receive it. Notice that there is no fasting clause attached to this promise. We do not gain favour from our Father through hunger strikes; we already have His favour because of the work of Jesus.

Fasting for power

Some argue that Jesus taught that fasting was the key to attaining spiritual power in the story of the demonized boy found in Matthew 17:14 – 21. In verse 21, Jesus tells His disciples that the reason that they were unable to cast out the demon is because that kind only comes out through prayer and fasting.

Let's take a look at a few translations of Matthew 17:21.

... [Could not be found]

Matthew 17:21 (NIV)

... [Could not be found]

Matthew 17:21 (NLT)

... [Could not be found]

Matthew 17:21 (ESV)

... [Could not be found]

Matthew 17:21 (GWT)

... [Could not be found]

Matthew 17:21 (ERV)

... [Could not be found]

Matthew 17:21 (CEV)

... [Could not be found]

Matthew 17:21 (ISV)

Interestingly, Matthew 17:21 has been omitted from a number of popular English translations. In these translations, the scriptures jump from Matthew 17:20 to Matthew 17:22. The reason that this verse is left out is because it is not included in the oldest manuscripts. Even the Bible translations that do include this verse include it in parenthesis with a note at the bottom of the page saying, “Early manuscripts don’t include this verse.” My point is that Matthew did not actually write this verse in his account. It was added in much later. This is clear when you read the verse in the context of the story. Let’s take a look.

*And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.” And Jesus answered, “**O faithless and***

*twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “**Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.***

Matthew 17:14 – 20 (ESV)

When the disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast the demon out of the boy, Jesus did not say, “*It is because of your little fasting.*” He said, “*It is because of your little faith.*” He goes on to say that if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, **nothing** will be impossible for you.

Immediately after this, some translations include “*this kind only comes out through prayer and fasting.*” So is faith or fasting the key to spiritual power? As you can see, Matthew 17:21 contradicts everything else that has been said in this passage.

I am not against abstaining from food. Even the apostles fasted from food on occasion. If you want to abstain from food so that you can clear your head, focus on God, detox your body, lose weight or just because you enjoy it, then be my guest. Abstaining from food is not the issue. It is the motive that I am addressing. If you are fasting in an attempt

to get something from God, you are trusting in your own efforts rather than the efforts of Jesus.

POSITIONING

“Positioning yourself” is a prime example of religious works disguised in good looking packaging. “*We need to pray and fast so that our hearts are positioned for God to...*” Wrong! Jesus has already positioned you perfectly. The only position your works are able to put you in is a position outside of grace.

QUIET TIME

Ouch... “Quiet time” made the dead works list! Let me explain: There is nothing wrong with spending quality time with Jesus. As a matter of fact, I encourage it. But the Church has twisted this time of fellowship into a religious duty. I would estimate that more than 90% of all have, at some point in their life, resolved to have a quiet time for a certain period every day. I am also confident in saying that for most of these Christians, this routine has not lasted. We can force ourselves to do something for a period, but if we make it into a law, we have set ourselves up for failure.

For many, “quiet times” have become an activity in which Christians check in to fulfil their religious duty and then check out again. It is a way of making them feel good

about their spiritual lives. When they start missing their quiet time they feel bad about themselves and conclude that they are backsliding. The only solution to this predicament is to set their alarm clocks an hour early and get an accountability team to force them to have a quiet time.

Spending time with the Lord is good, but nobody wants to spend time with someone who doesn't really want to be with them. If you aren't enjoying your quality time with God, what makes you think that He is? Spending quality time with God is not a law that you need to keep religiously. It is a privilege that you get to take part in whenever you want to.

LIVING WITH GOD

Western Christians have completely compartmentalized their lives. There is a time to work, a time to play, a time to do chores, a time to relax and even a time for God. Your relationship with God is not meant to be put into one of life's compartments. It is meant to be part of your everyday life. Jesus wants to work with you, He wants to play with you, He wants to do chores with you, He wants to rest with you and He even wants to do "Christian stuff" with you.

He is with us 24 hours a day. Why are we so quick to reduce our relationship with Him to a specific time slot? Let's do ourselves a favour: Let's lose the religion and just live with God.

ENTER INTO HIS REST

These are just a few religious works that the modern Church has adopted. The same principal applies to giving, evangelism, exercising spiritual gifts, reading the Bible, going to church, communion, fellowship, and just about anything you can think of. Many Christians have made the “Christian religion” an idol by putting their religious works in the place of Jesus.

*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For **My yoke is easy** and **My burden is light**.*

Matthew 11:28 – 30 (NASB)

Jesus is not handing out heavy burdens for people to carry. He offers rest to those who are weary and heavy-laden; His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The life of a Christian is not meant to be a strenuous routine of God-pleasing activities. God is already perfectly pleased with us because of the work of Jesus. If you are feeling exhausted under the weight of a million religious obligations that you have been told to carry, I encourage you to lay your works down at the feet of Jesus and enter into His rest.



YOU'VE GOT IT

*Oh, the folly of trying to enter a room that you are
already in!*

WATCHMAN NEE



IN RECENT YEARS, I have noticed an increasingly prevalent orphan mentality within the Church, a way of thinking that is reducing sons and daughters to slaves and beggars. We are constantly crying out to God, begging Him to give us “more.” We want more of His presence, mantles, anointings, open heavens, power, authority, spiritual gifts, etc. We seem to think that God is withholding His blessings from us until we have completed a sufficient amount of begging, pleading and fasting. To believe this is to miss the heart of God. He is your dad and He loves you. He wants you to be blessed more than you want to be blessed.

We spend so much time asking God for “more” that we miss what He has already given us: everything!

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in
the heavenly places in Christ*

Ephesians 1:3 (NASB)

*seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*

2 Peter 1:3 (NASB)

This orphan mentality has become so common that we even boast in the fact that we hunger and thirst for God. Jesus did not come so that we could hunger and thirst. He came so that we could be filled to overflowing.

*Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me **will not hunger**, and he who believes in me **will never thirst**.”*

John 6:35 (NASB)

Jesus promises that if we go to Him we will never hunger and if we believe in Him we will never thirst. If you are constantly hungry and thirsty, where are you going to eat and drink? Jesus does not want you to be desperate; He wants you to be completely satisfied. Satisfaction is not the point at which our Christian life starts to die, as many teach. It is the point from which we start to grow. When we realize what we have been given, it is impossible to remain desperate and hungry.

GOD'S PRESENCE

Most Christians have spent a great deal of time on their knees praying prayers along the lines of:

“God, come be with me...”

“Fill me up God...”

“Let your presence fall in this place...”

The problem with these prayers is that they are rooted in unbelief. He is already with you, you have already been filled, and there is not a place in existence in which He is not present. When we ask God to do what He has already done, we are simply saying that we don't believe that He has done it.

Jesus was extremely clear about where He was going to be spending His time post-ascension: with you!

*I am with you **always**, even to the end of the age.*

Matthew 28:20 (NASB)

He is present when you are at church, He is present when you are at work, He is present when you are doing dishes and He is present when you are on the toilet. We don't need to continually beg Him to come. He never left! I took a look at the Greek words used in Matthew 28:20 (commonly translated “I am with you always”). Simply put, it means this: I am with you **always**!

What's more, God does not just hang out with you; He lives inside of you. The Bible describes you as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Under the Old Covenant, the presence of the Lord rested in a temple made with human hands. Under the New Covenant, His presence rests within you. You are the new holy of holies!

*Do you not know that **you are a temple of God** and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NASB)

*Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own.*

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NASB)

*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who **dwells in you**.*

Romans 8:11 (NASB)

You can never go somewhere where God isn't. You are His home; He goes wherever you go. He doesn't take days off or go away on vacation. He is fully with us all the time.

Moreover, God has joined Himself together with your spirit.

*But the one who joins himself to the Lord is **one spirit with Him**.*

1 Corinthians 6:17 (NASB)

Your spirit and His Spirit have been fused together! Think of it this way. God was red paint and you were yellow paint. You are now just orange paint. No one can tell where the red ends and the yellow begins. Together, you have become a single new colour. This is not a reality only for those who spend the right amount of time praying and fasting; this is a reality for every follower of Jesus, whether they realize it or not.

MORE GOD

If you got one more drop of God, you would have more of Him than He has. When you were saved, you did not receive a piece of God. You received all of Him!

*For in him [Jesus] **the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.***

Colossians 2:9 – 10 (ESV)

We have been filled with the fullness of God in Christ. As a matter of fact, you are overflowing! No matter how much you work, you can never get more of God than you already have.

God is not a finite substance. He is a person, and no person comes in percentages. Sure, we can become more aware of His presence and He can choose to manifest Himself in more obvious ways, but the person of God is fully *with* us, fully *in* us and fully *joined* to us all the time.

ENCOUNTERING GOD

It is important to remember that our relationship with God is not based on feelings; rather, it is based on faith. If you measure your relationship with God by the number of goose bumps you got in your last quiet time, you will constantly require greater encounters to feel connected to Him. God is just as present in times of silence as He is when your hair stands on end and your toes curl up. Under the Old Covenant, God would visit His people on occasion; under the New Covenant, He lives within every one of His people. Being a Christian is not about intermittent encounters; it is about constant union.

That said, there is obviously nothing wrong with having awesome encounters with God. The key to having these encounters is simply to realize that Jesus has already put you smack dab in the middle of the greatest encounter with God that you can ever experience. You are already wrapped up in the glorious presence of the Lord, you are already seated in heavenly places with Christ, you are already filled to overflowing with the presence of God, and you are already one with Him. You don't need to do anything. You simply need to become aware of reality through faith. If you want to have an encounter with God, become aware of the encounter that you are already having and it will manifest to the degree that you are aware of it.

*For the earth will be filled with the **knowledge** of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*

Habakkuk 2:14 (NIV)

It is not the glory of the Lord that will fill the earth. It is the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. The glory is already here. Just become aware of it!

~ Open Heavens ~

This is another popular waste of time—trying to rip, pray and fast the heavens open. We already have wide open heavens through the sacrifice of Jesus, and no amount of praying or fasting can open them any more than they already are.

The temple veil

*And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last.
And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*

Mark 15:37 – 38 (NASB)

During the time of Jesus' incarnation, the temple in Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish religious life. It was the place where animal sacrifices were carried out and worship according to the law of Moses was followed faithfully. In the temple a veil separated the holy of holies,

which was the earthly dwelling place of the presence of God, from the rest of the temple, where men dwelt. The event described in Mark 15, in which this veil is torn in two, is extremely significant.

*Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us **through the veil, that is, His flesh...***

Hebrews 10:19 – 20 (NASB)

When Jesus died, the temple veil, which stood between the presence of God and man, was torn in two. Hebrews tells us that Christ's body was the veil, torn open for us. Through Christ's body, we have entered into the presence of God. There is no longer anything standing between us; Jesus destroyed all "closed heavens" on the cross.

Jacob's ladder

In Genesis 28, we read about a dream that Jacob had in which *"a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to Heaven; and behold; the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants."*

In John 1, Jesus makes a remarkable statement related to this dream.

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."***

John 1:48 – 51 (NASB)

Jesus is Jacob's ladder! You have Mr. Open Heaven living inside you. The only closed Heaven that exists for Christians can be easily located between their ears.

ANOINTINGS

A large portion of the church is spending a lot of time chasing "greater anointings". If the Church would stop chasing after the imaginary "more" and start using the anointing they already have, they would see the manifestation of everything that they are after. You have God living inside of you! What else do you need? This idea that we need to "press in" for greater anointing is absolutely ridiculous.

The Bible says that you have been made complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). It says that you have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). It says that you have been given every spiritual blessing in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). It does not say anything about pressing in for more. Jesus has already pressed in for you.

The number one reason Christians are unable to heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the Gospel, perform miracles, prophesy, etc., is because they believe they lack something. Half the Church is chasing greater anointing, trying to gain some extra spiritual power so that they can finally do what Jesus commanded them to. But Jesus did not give you a job to do without also giving you the ability to do it. You have been called and equipped. If you had the slightest idea of how much firepower you are packing, you would never ask God for more again. You would be too preoccupied using everything that you already have. I assure you, the anointing you have right now is more than enough to destroy every work of the devil and turn the entire world “upside right.”

Faith, not feelings

*As for you, the anointing which you received from Him **abides in you**, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.*

1 John 2:27 (NASB)

The anointing that you have received is an abiding anointing. It does not come and go, it does not wane, and it does not lift. It just remains. When you feel the anointing, you are anointed. When you don't feel the anointing, you are still anointed. The anointing is not a feeling; it is a person. The anointing is the Holy Spirit, and you are His temple.

The Church is hooked on feelings. We think that when the anointing “comes,” our hands start vibrating, our knees shake and we get that anointed feeling in our belly. The next thing we know, the heavens open and the voice of God says, “NOW! Use it quick, before it wears off!” The fact that you are anointed is just that—a fact! Your anointing is not dependent on how you feel. You can heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, prophesy, preach the Gospel, etc., on a good day or a bad day—whether you feel anointed or not.

The anointing of Christ

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, **but Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

Christ means “anointed One.” That means that “Jesus Christ” translates to “Jesus, the anointed One.” Galatians 2:20 tells us that we no longer live, but Mr. Anointing lives within us. You are anointed because you are filled with the anointed

One. Jesus is always the Christ (anointed One), even when He moves into you. Why do you want the “Smith Wigglesworth anointing” or the “William Branham anointing” when you already have the anointing of Jesus? Whose anointing do you think they were running on? You are connected to the source. You do not need to go to a middleman.

Giants in the faith

As Christians, we like to call people who live like Jesus “giants of the faith” but in reality, there is no such thing. The average Christian is living so far below his potential that when he sees a normal Christian doing normal Christian things like healing the sick and raising the dead he calls him a “giant in the faith.” The difference between a normal Christian (aka a giant in the faith) and other Christians is not their level of power or anointing. The difference is their revelation of the power and anointing that they carry, and their willingness to use it.

If you want to live more anointed, act more anointed. It is as simple as that.

MANTLES

In the books of Kings, we are told the stories of Elijah and Elisha. Elijah was a powerful prophet, and Elisha was his apprentice. Before Elijah was taken to Heaven in 2

Kings 2, Elisha asks him for a “double portion” of Elijah’s spirit. When Elijah was taken up, his mantle was passed on to Elisha and with it, the double portion that he requested. After Elisha had died, a dead body was thrown into his tomb. When the body touched Elisha’s bones, it came back to life (2 Kings 13:21)

This story is used to teach the Christians about how we can receive the power of the Spirit through the mantles of other men. Good news, isn’t it? All we need to do to move in the power of the Spirit is find an anointed saint who is about to die and get him to pass on his mantle to us! People even go as far as visiting the graves of dead saints in an attempt to suck their mantle out of the ground! I find it extremely sad when we look to human beings and the bones of the dead for the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than looking to Christ.

Those who use this story to teach these doctrines forget an important fact. Elijah and Elisha were Old Covenant prophets! Under the Old Covenant, the Spirit of God came upon a select few people for limited periods of time. As a result, if someone received a mantle, he would be getting something he didn’t have before. Conversely, under the New Covenant, every believer has the fullness of the Spirit of God living within him. As a result, mantles are not mentioned once in the New Testament. If they were as important as some preachers think they are, why didn’t Paul mention them at all? Paul never tells us to ask for double portions.

He tells us that we are already complete! Double everything is still everything.

God is not releasing anything new to you. He has already given you everything you need. The only thing that a Christian lacks is the revelation of what he has.

GROWING AND MATURING

When a baby is born, he is born complete, but as he grows up, he needs to learn how to use everything that he has. It is the same in the spirit. When a person is born again, they are born complete in Christ, but that does not mean that they are born mature. They still need to realize everything that they have been born with and then learn how to use it. Growing and maturing is extremely important for Christians. There is, however, a big difference between the way that this is commonly taught and the way that this actually happens. We are generally taught that if we are to grow as Christians, we need to do a whole list of things such as have a 60 minute quiet time per day, share the Gospel with four people per week, pray and fast for the nation, abstain from shellfish and avoid trimming the edges of our beards. If we do all these things, we will attain greater degrees of holiness, favour, anointing, etc.

In reality, maturing as a Christian is not about becoming something more. It is about realizing who we already are.

We mature by growing in the revelation of our identity in Christ. We start the process of growing and maturing at the end, so to speak: We are made complete and are given everything when we are born again. We then spend the rest of our time discovering who we truly are.

To grow and mature, we simply need to renew our minds to our new reality. As we realize who we already are, we are transformed from one degree of glory to another.

*And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Romans 12:2 (NASB)

You are transformed to the degree that your mind is renewed. This means that you walk in the degree of union, freedom, anointing, etc., that you are aware of.



I AM REVIVAL

*I am not waiting for a move of God,
I am a move of God!*

WILLIAM BOOTH



UP TO THIS point in the book, we have been speaking about the true Gospel and its impact on the Church. But the good news was never intended to be kept between Christians. It is meant to go out to the lost and broken people of every nation. It is meant to transform lives and change the world. This is the task that the Church, which is the *body* of Christ, has been given.

*And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. **These signs will accompany those who have believed:** in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*

Mark 16:15 – 18 (NASB)

In this chapter, I am going to be addressing a number of popular doctrines within the Church that make sharing

the Gospel next to impossible. These incorrect doctrines are related to God's sovereignty, God's judgment, intercession, the role of the Church, etc.

I want to emphasize once again that we do not have to do anything to be loved or accepted by God. No amount of preaching, evangelism or sacrifice for the kingdom will get you any more love or acceptance than you already have. Our service to God is an overflow of our love for Him and our love for the world. If you never did another thing for God in your life, He would still love and accept you as much as ever, because your relationship with Him is not based on your work. It is based on His.

SOVEREIGNTY

The Church has widely adopted an incorrect understanding of the sovereignty of God. It is commonly believed that God is in control of everything and that nothing happens that is not within His will. In this, God is held responsible for every good and bad thing that happens on the planet. Apparently, it is part of God's plan for 30,000 children to die of starvation today and in His sovereignty, He allows conditions like cancer and HIV to destroy people's bodies for some greater good.

This is one of the most destructive errors within the Church today, though it is easily rectified with the use of a dictionary.

The dictionary defines the word “sovereign” as follows:

- Having supreme rank, power, or authority.
- Supreme; preeminent; indisputable: a sovereign right.
- Greatest in degree; utmost or extreme.
- Being above all others in character, importance, excellence, etc.
- Self-governing; independent.

Is God sovereign? Absolutely! But we can’t just make up our own definition for the word. He is sovereign in that He is the highest being in existence in rank, power and authority and is above all others in character, importance and excellence.

This does not mean that He sits on a throne in Heaven and signs off on every event that takes place. God is sovereign, but His will is not always done; this fact is obvious from Scripture.

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3 – 4 (NASB)

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9 (NASB)

It is God's expressed will that *none* perish. He wants *everyone* to be saved. However, His will is not done in this area; Not everyone is saved. We are also able to see evidence of this fact in the "Lord's prayer".

*"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ' Your kingdom come. **Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.***

Matthew 6:9 - 10 (NASB)

Why would Jesus tell His disciples to pray that God's will be done on earth if His will is always done? Jesus was not instructing His disciples to pray a meaningless prayer. God is not a divine puppet-master orchestrating the events of the universe. The presence of evil does not preclude the existence of a good God. It simply confirms the existence of a devil and fallen human beings with free will.

God allowed it

Some will argue that if God is all-powerful, all-knowing and able to prevent bad things from happening, the fact that bad things happen suggests that He is actively allowing them. This is also incorrect. God does not allow bad things to happen. The Church allows bad things to happen. Let me put it this way:

The chief of police gets an anonymous phone call one day tipping him off to a crime that is going to be committed

the following week. The informant explains that a criminal will be breaking into the small red house on Straight Street at exactly 17:05 on Thursday. He also gives a detailed description of what the criminal will look like.

The chief of police thanks the informant for the tip-off and gets on the phone to his top officers. He arranges to have 10,000 heavily armed men stationed around the two-bedroom, one-bathroom house, together with an army of tanks and helicopters. He then gives his men strict instructions:

SHOOT ON SIGHT!

The next Thursday, at exactly 17:05 they see the criminal walking toward the little red house. The alarm sounds and everyone sees him. But they hesitate! They then step to the side and let the man through, who proceeds to rob the house.

Whose fault was it that the criminal was allowed to rob the house? Could anybody accuse the chief of police of allowing the crime to be committed? Of course not! He went to great lengths to make sure the house was secure.

In the same way, God does not allow evil. He has gone to great lengths to make sure that the world is secure. He has stationed millions of heavily armed officers around the world and armed them with mind-numbing power and authority. He has given them strict instructions:

There is a criminal running around stealing, killing and destroying. He has red skin, a pointy tail, and a pitchfork.

I have given you complete power and authority over him. When you see him or his work, destroy it.

The problem is that when the Church sees suffering and evil, they just sit there on their inexhaustible supply of power and do nothing. They then have the audacity to blame God for allowing suffering and evil to take place!

My good friend Nathan Odell says it best: “*God exercised His sovereignty when He gave us authority over the devil.*”

GOD’S JUDGMENT

God is not an angry judge waiting for an opportunity to pour out His wrath upon the world because of their sins. Sadly, when the world experiences almost any large-scale tragedy such as an earthquake, a tsunami or some terrorist attack, there is almost instantly a choir of Christians preaching this message.

When a group of terrorists crashed planes into the Pentagon and the World Trade Centers, for example, it took less than 24 hours for a large portion of the Christian community to announce that it was the judgment of an angry God for the sins of America. Apparently, God was angry enough with the USA that He killed thousands of men, women and children, many of whom were Christians.

This view of God is absolute nonsense. First, to believe this is to believe that the righteous are judged for the sins

of the wicked. God did not do this even under the Old Covenant! Do you remember the conversation Abraham had with God regarding the destruction of Sodom?

Abraham came near and said, “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” So the LORD said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account.”

Genesis 18:23 – 26 (NASB)

Abraham continues discussing the matter with God. Eventually he asks the Lord if He will spare the city for the sake of 10 righteous people and God says “yes.” In the end, God does destroy the city, but only after evacuating Lot and his family. The same applies to the flood in which God destroys the ungodly but spares Noah, who was a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5).

How many righteous people died in the attacks on 9/11? How many Christians do you think were in New Orleans when hurricane Katrina hit? So does God judge His own people for the sins of others now? If God did not even do

this under the Old Covenant, when He still remembered people's sin, what makes us think that He is doing this under the New Covenant, now that the issue of sin has been dealt with?

The New Covenant did not cause God to judge the world unjustly. Jesus has taken the sin of the world, together with the judgment that accompanied it, upon Himself. As a result, God is not holding sin against humanity anymore. This is true for everybody, regardless of whether they are sinful or not. If God continues to judge the world for sin now that Jesus has taken that judgment on the world's behalf, then Jesus died for nothing. There will, of course, be a *day* of judgment for everyone who does not accept the payment of Jesus in their place. But that day is not today. We are in a dispensation of grace; today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:1 – 2).

*If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him **at the last day**.*

John 12:47-48 (NASB)

Jesus did not say that His word will judge him *in the last days*. He said that His word will judge him *on the last day*. God is not killing innocent children with natural disasters

because He is angry with abortion, nor is He wiping out cities because they have embraced homosexuality. Jesus hates sin but He loves sinners.

*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the **ungodly**. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — **but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

Romans 5:6 – 8 (ESV)

When did Jesus go from dying to save sinners to wiping them out? When did He switch from unconditional love to violent judgment? Jesus did not come to destroy sinners. Rather, He came to destroy sin so that sinners may be saved. The Church was not given a message of death and judgment. She was given a message of life and forgiveness.

*Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.***

2 Corinthians 5:18 – 21 (NASB)

What is the word of reconciliation that has been given to us? God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,

not counting their sins against them. This is the message that the early Church echoed; this is the message that we carry today. It is the goodness of God that brings man to repentance, not the judgment of God.

*The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the centre of the court, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. **Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?**” They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “**He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.**” Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the centre of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “**I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.**”*

John 8:3 – 11 (NASB)

A group of religious leaders brought a woman to Jesus. This woman had been caught in the very act of adultery, an offense punishable by death according to the Law of Moses.

Before they carried out the sentence, they took the woman to Jesus, hoping to use the situation to find grounds on which they could accuse Him. But God, in human form, looked to them and said, *“Let the one who has no sin throw the first stone.”* One by one, they all left, leaving only Jesus and the woman.

This is what I find interesting: Jesus had no sin. He was qualified to throw the first stone and would have been justified in doing so. But instead He says:

“Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?”

“No one, Lord.”

“I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”

Christians tell the world to *“sin no more so that God will not condemn you.”* Jesus tells the world, *“I do not condemn you. Now go and sin no more.”* It is the grace of God that teaches us to say no to sin (Titus 2:11). Judgment is the will of self-righteous, religious people. It is not the will of God.

Sickness, disease, death, etc., are not manifestations of God’s judgment. They are manifestations of the kingdom of darkness and a fallen world.

Fighting for the wrong team

Our job is to establish the values and attributes of the kingdom of God on earth. The problem is that most of us

have mixed up the values and attributes of the kingdom of Satan with those of the kingdom of God. We have therefore created doctrines that protect the work of Satan, which creates opportunities for it to be “on earth as it is in the darkness.” Here is a trick that will allow you to easily identify the works of Jesus vs. the works of Satan.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

John 10:10 (ESV)

When you see killing, stealing and destroying, you can deduce that it is the work of the devil, whether it be directly or indirectly. When you see abundant life, you can deduce that it is God. We have wrongly assigned the work of the devil to God, and the work of God to the devil. When God heals the sick, many Christians credit the miracle to the power of Satan. When the devil causes death and destruction, many Christians credit the devastation to the judgment of God. *God never comes to steal, kill and destroy and the devil never comes to give abundant life.* How do I know this?

*And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.” So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? **If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.** If a house is divided against itself, that*

house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.

Mark 3:22 – 26 (NIV)

A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. If Satan drives out Satan, his kingdom will fall. Likewise, if Jesus resists His own kingdom, it will fall. Jesus did not take the sin of humanity upon Himself so that He could judge humanity for its sin.

God is not angry with Christians for their sins. Nor is He angry with sinners for their sins. He does not deal with sin in hostility or judgment. All hostility was removed on the cross (Colossians 2:13 – 14).

*Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.***

James 1:17 (NASB)

I AM REVIVAL

We all want to see the lost multitudes of the world turn to Jesus; "revival" has become quite a catch-phrase within certain branches of the Church in recent years. The good news is that "revival" was God's idea in the first place. He wants it more than we do. So then, why are we not seeing the revival that the Church has been praying for?

There are literally thousands of ministries backed by millions of Christians who believe that sin is the factor that holds back revival. They believe if we want to see a “mighty move of God,” all we need to do is pray, fast and repent of the sins of our nation. Most of these ministries are founded on a single verse in the Old Testament.

*...if my people who are called by my name **humble themselves**, and **pray** and **seek my face** and **turn from their wicked ways**, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and **heal their land**.*

2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)

These ministries have good intentions. All they want is to see their land healed. Unfortunately, they have adopted a completely Old Covenant approach to seeing this goal realized. 2 Chronicles 7:14 is not meant to be applied by New Covenant Christians, and this is why...

Notice that the first word in this verse (if) begins with a lower case “i”. Why? It is the second half of a sentence! Reading only the second half of any sentence can drastically change your understanding of what is being said, so let’s start by taking a look at this sentence in its entirety.

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and

seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)

God has not shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, He has not commanded the locust to devour the land and He has not sent pestilence among His people! This is an Old Covenant verse, within a specific context for a specific group of people. If we want to see revival, we do not need to get millions of people together to humble themselves, pray, seek God's face and repent of the sins of the nation. Sin is not causing God to judge the world or hold back revival. Under the Old Covenant, a city steeped in sin was ripe for destruction. Under the New Covenant, a city steeped in sin is ripe for revival!

*The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; **but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,***

Romans 5:20 (NASB)

There are millions of people around the world who humble themselves, pray, seek God's face and repent of the wicked ways of their nations in an attempt to get God to heal the land. If this was honestly required by God for revival, I would seriously doubt His faithfulness. After years of praying for God to "*end abortion and send revival,*" abortion is at an all-time high and we are not seeing revival. Why?

*Then He said to His disciples, “**The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.**”*

Matthew 9:37 – 38 (NASB)

We are asking God for a harvest, but Jesus told us that the harvest is plentiful already! God is not looking for people to pray for a harvest; it is already there. He is looking for people to bring in the harvest. Before Jesus was taken into Heaven, He told us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel!

*And He put all things in subjection under His **feet**, and gave **Him as head** over all things to **the church, which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Ephesians 1:22 – 23 (NASB)

Jesus is the head, the Church is His body, and all things are under His feet. In other words, everything is in subjection under the Church, and Christ is the head of the Church. In a body, the head gives instructions to the body and the body moves. The reason we are not seeing revival is simple. The body disregards the head's instructions to move and instead spends all its time asking the head to move by itself!

You have the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead living inside you. You are equipped with power and authority from God Himself to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons and preach the Gospel.

John G. Lake said, “*I feel that very frequently prayer is made a refuge to dodge the action of faith.*”

Prayer is not a substitute for action. If we want to see revival, we need to actually be the hands and feet of Jesus. Rather than asking God to answer prayer, we need to be an answer to prayer. We are God’s solution to the world’s problems. We don’t need Him to do anything new. He has already done everything He needs to do. It is time for us to start living from what He has done.

The Gospel of power

*Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, **because they did not repent.** “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.** Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in **the day of judgment** than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; **for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.***

Matthew 11:20 – 23 (NASB)

Even though this passage is pre-cross, it gives us a key to seeing cities coming to repentance. Jesus tells us that power authenticates the message. If Tyre, Sidon and Sodom had seen

the miracles that these cities saw, they would have believed and repented. The Gospel of grace is a show-and-tell Gospel. If you preach the message without a demonstration of the kingdom, you are preaching half of the Gospel. That is why Paul said:

*...and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, **but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.***

1 Corinthians 2:4 – 5 (NASB)

And again:

*For the kingdom of God **is not a matter of talk but of power.***

1 Corinthians 4:20 (NIV)

A large portion of the Church has become focused on music, sermons, programs and other forms of entertainment in an attempt to become “culturally relevant,” rather than focusing on demonstrating God’s kingdom. But being culturally relevant does not transform nations or change lives. Only the power of God does that.

Demonstrating the kingdom of God may sound like an impossible thing to do, something reserved for the elite. But the truth is that whether you have been a Christian for 20 seconds or 20 years, you are anointed, you are complete, and you are equipped to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast

out demons, perform miracles and preach the Gospel—be it at work, at school, at home, on the street or in deepest, darkest Africa.



MIRACULOUS MYTHS

God is a lot nicer than you think.

JOSHUA TONGOL



IN 2009, I sat in amazement as I witnessed supernatural healing for the first time. What I saw impacted me so profoundly that it would radically alter the course of my life. It challenged everything that I believed about the power of God and the miraculous and started me on my journey into the supernatural. I had seen that it was possible; now I wanted to learn how to do what Jesus did.

It wasn't long before I, together with a couple of like-minded friends, started going out to minister to people who were suffering with sicknesses and injuries. During this period of my life, I would literally walk up to every single sick or injured person I saw and offer to pray for them. It didn't matter where they were or what they were doing. I don't know how many people I prayed for, but it must have been several hundred. Though I was doing everything I knew to do, I saw little to no success. I read healing books, listened to healing teachings and tried every formula and technique that I could get my hands on, but still—nothing.

This was extremely discouraging, but I was convinced that God could use me to heal the sick, even though I was the most unlikely candidate I could imagine.

After continuing in this manner for what seemed like forever, I decided to move halfway around the world to attend a well known ministry school. So I sold everything I had, hopped on a plane, and found myself in California. Within a few weeks, I was attending my first class on healing. The teacher taught that to heal the sick, we needed to laugh over them. He also spoke to us for a while about a revivalist named Lonnie Frisbee and told us a story about how he had received Lonnie Frisbee's mantle while on a trip. At the end of the class, he instructed everyone to form a line. He then explained that he was going to lay hands on each of us, and that when he did, we would receive the "Lonnie Frisbee anointing." I couldn't believe my luck! The Lonnie Frisbee anointing!? With that, I would be able to change the world! I went through several times to ensure that I got a quadruple portion of the anointing.

The next day, I saw an injured person walking through a local shopping centre. I walked up to him with newfound confidence and offered to pray for him. I had the Lonnie Frisbee anointing, after all! I laid hands on him and laughed over him, as I had been taught the day before. I asked him to test it out. Nothing... I tried a couple more times, but to no avail. I walked away despondent and perplexed. I had

gone around the world looking for the power of God, but it continued to evade me.

Months went by, yielding the same results. Finally, it was time for everyone in the school to go on a mission trip. I was headed for Tepic, Mexico. About a week before we were due to leave, I had a talk with the Lord that marked a turning point in my life.

Lord, I love you... But I refuse to preach a gospel that doesn't work! I have been doing everything I know to do, but nothing is happening! This can't go on. What am I doing wrong?!

It wasn't long before the Lord started to speak to me, and what He said changed everything.

On my trip to Tepic, about 95% of the people we administered healing to were instantly restored in front of our eyes. We visited hospital waiting rooms and healed everybody before they had a chance to see the doctor. Wherever we went, signs followed, whether we were walking in the park, doing our shopping, or preaching the Gospel. It was unlike anything I had ever experienced.

Since then, it has only gotten better. The revelation that I received on that day is so simple that when I take groups of people out to heal the sick, I start with less than 10 minutes of training. To date, every person I have ever taken out has been able to perform miracles with ease from day one.

You don't need to spend years following signs and wonders like I did. Under the New Covenant, signs and wonders are supposed to follow you (Mark 16:1 - 8). Over the next two chapters, I am going to lay out a small portion of what the Lord has taught me regarding healing since that day before my trip. While this is not a comprehensive teaching that addresses every question, it will give you more than enough information to do the works that Jesus did—and more.

Popular Christianity is filled with many incorrect doctrines surrounding the topic of divine healing and the miraculous. Many of these beliefs make it next to impossible to have faith for miracles. Before we look at what is required for signs, wonders and miracles, I am going to take some time to dismantle some of the more popular myths that often hinder the miraculous.

MYTH 1: GOD GIVES SICKNESS

The idea that God is the one handing out sickness is one of the primary reasons that Christians are unable to heal the sick today. How can you fight something in Jesus' name if you believe that He is the one who is causing it? Many believe that God gives people sickness and disease in order to develop their character and teach them to rely on Him. This is an error that comes from not knowing how to identify your team.

Steal, kill and destroy = devil

Abundant life = Christ

Sickness is not designed to develop character. It is designed to make you suffer and die. If you didn't have an immune system to defend your body, even the common cold would take you out. Sickness, therefore, falls into the "steal, kill and destroy" category. It is a work of the devil, not the will of God.

Let's use a bit of logic here. If God gave people sickness and diseases to help them develop character, why do people die of sickness and disease every day? How does character help a dead man? And do you think that babies who are born with severe sicknesses and deformities have the rational faculties needed to develop character from their suffering? There may be some people who develop perseverance through their suffering, but that does not mean that God gave the sickness to them. It just means that He causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Here is some more food for thought. Why is it that Christians, who believe that their sickness is part of God's will, go to the doctor and spend money trying to be healed? Are they trying to step out of God's will? This seems somewhat inconsistent to me.

The truth is that it is God's will for every single sick person to be healed, every single time. We are able to see this clearly through the life of Jesus, who is the image of God.

He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Colossians 1:15 (NASB)

*Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? **He who has seen Me has seen the Father**; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

John 14:9 (NASB)

*So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the **Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.** For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.*

John 5:19 – 20 (ESV)

Jesus did only what He saw the Father doing. He is also the perfect representation of the Father's will, character and nature. He never once said to anyone, "Well, I would love to heal you but that's just not what the Father is doing at the moment." On the contrary, He healed every single person

who came to Him, without fail. We often see crowds gathering around Jesus, and the Bible says that “*He healed them all.*” Apparently that is always what His Father was doing.

*You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and **healing all who were oppressed by the devil**, for God was with Him.*

Acts 10:38 (NASB)

When you realize that sickness is from the devil, you are able to fight it. When you realize who you are in Christ, you are able to win every time. Jesus healed them all... His standard is the only standard worth reaching for!

Moreover, the psalmist prophesies this about Jesus in Psalm 103:

*Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not **all** his benefits,
who forgives **all** your iniquity,
who heals **all** your diseases,*

Psalms 103:2 – 3 (ESV)

Don't forget any of the Lord's benefits. He forgives *all* our iniquities and heals *all* of our diseases. The same passage that says He forgives all our iniquities also says that He heals all our diseases. We can't say He forgives all of our iniquities and only heals some of our diseases. Both of these

truths are included in the same passage! If a sick person is not healed, it has nothing to do with the will of God. To come to that conclusion is to elevate your experience above God's word.

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **so that you may prove what the will of God is**, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Romans 12:2 (NASB)

If a preacher lays hands on a sick person, and that person is not healed, it does not prove that it is God's will for the man to be sick. Even a non-Christian can do that. But a Christian who has renewed his mind can prove the will of God by doing the impossible.

After a great "worship set" and "powerful sermon" at church one Sunday morning, the preacher invites the sick within the congregation to come forward for prayer. Bob, who broke his arm three days earlier, decides that he would like to be healed and comes forward. He walks over to Mike, who is a prayer team leader, and asks him to pray for his arm to be healed. Mike pulls a little bottle of anointing oil from his pocket and anoints him in the name of the Lord. He then lays his hands upon Bob's head, looks toward Heaven and starts to pray, *"Oh God! Please come down to us and heal this man! Yet, not my will, but yours be done!"*

Bob tests it out, but nothing has changed. Mike looks at him with regret. *“I’m sorry, Bob. It’s obviously not God’s will to heal you today.”*

Bob nods in agreement and turns to go home. *I wonder why God wants me to suffer like this*, he thinks to himself. *Oh well, He is probably using this to build my character.*

He is about to leave when he notices Nathan, who is new to the Church, ministering to the sick in an unusual way. Bob watches in amazement as person after person receives complete healing. Eventually he goes up to Nathan.

“Brother Mark has already anointed me with oil and beseeched the Lord on my behalf,” he explains, *“but this arm of mine is still in a lot of pain. Could you give it a try?”*

Nathan looks at him with a grin. *“Test it out, it should be good.”*

“What do you mean? You haven’t even prayed for it yet.”

“Don’t worry about that. Just give it a try.”

Bob wiggles his wrist around in the cast. *“The pain is gone!”* he exclaims.

“Try doing something you couldn’t do before,” Nathan suggests.

Bob drops to the floor and does 10 pushups, totally healed.

I have seen this exact scenario countless times. Did God's will change suddenly when Bob went to Nathan? No. Nathan just knew who he was and knew the will of God. Have confidence when you lay hands on the sick, knowing that God wants them to be well more than you do. He didn't command us to heal some of the sick; He just commanded us to heal the sick. When you minister healing to someone, you are doing God's will.

MYTH 2: HEALING ISN'T INCLUDED

Another common myth is that healing is not included in the atonement. This is what Isaiah prophesies about Jesus in Isaiah 53:

*Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows
He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him
stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.*

*But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He
was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our
well-being fell upon Him, **And by His scourging we
are healed.***

Isaiah 53:4 – 5 (NASB)

Jesus took all of our pains and sicknesses on the whipping post. That is why Isaiah says that by His scourging, we *are* healed. Some will argue that this is referring to spiritual and

emotional healing. But once again, a look at the original Hebrew quickly rectifies this error.

In verse 4, the New American Standard Bible says that Jesus bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. The word translated “griefs” in this passage is the Hebrew word “*choli*,” which directly translated means “sickness,” and the word translated “sorrows” in this passage is the Hebrew word “*makob*,” which directly translated means “pain.” Here is a more accurate translation of this verse:

*But it was **our pain he took, and our diseases were put on him:** while to us he seemed as one diseased, on whom God’s punishment had come.*

Isaiah 53:4 (BBE)

Healing and salvation go hand in hand. Both of them have been paid for in full through the work of Jesus.

It is already done

When someone turns from their sin and comes to Jesus for the first time, Jesus does not need to do anything to save them. He does not need to get back on the cross and die for them again. His sacrifice was *once* and for *all*. He has already saved every person who will ever be born. All that remains is for people to accept or reject their free salvation.

The same applies to healing. Notice that Isaiah 53:5 does not say that by His scourging we are *going* to be healed. It says

that we *are* healed. God does not need to lift a finger to heal the sick because He has *already* done His part. As a matter of fact, if I command someone's body to be healed, the healing has to take place even if for some reason it is not God's will. Why? Because God has already paid for the healing of every human who will ever live. It is too late for God to withhold healing now. If He wanted to withhold healing, he would have had to do it before He healed everybody!

The essence of faith for healing is not that God will, but that He already has. When we lay hands on the sick, we are not trying to get God to do something new. We are enforcing something that He has already done.

MYTH 3: CONFESSION IS REQUIRED

People do NOT need to confess their sin in order to be healed. In some cases, sin may open a door for the demonic or sickness, but it can never prevent healing.

While ministering to people on the streets, we have seen prostitutes get healed while walking home after their shift. We have seen drug addicts get healed while they are still high. We even saw a man get healed who, after giving his life to the Lord, admitted to murdering three people! Miracles bring people to repentance by authenticating the Gospel. Repentance does not create miracles.

The undertone of your message is far more powerful than your actual message. When we tell people that they need to confess their sin to be healed, we imply that their sickness is a judgment from God because of their sin. All this does is heap guilt and condemnation on them.

*And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, He said, “**Friend, your sins are forgiven you.**”*

Luke 5:18 – 30 (NASB)

When Jesus addressed sin, He didn’t say your sins have made you sick. He gave them the good news: “Your sins are forgiven!”.

The belief that confession is required for healing comes primarily from James 5:16.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

James 5:16 (NASB)

Many take this verse to mean that confession is required for healing, but this verse is not a complete idea in and of itself. Notice that the first word of this sentence is “therefore.” Let’s look at the previous verses to see why.

*Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; **and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.***

James 5: 14 - 15 (NASB)

Verses 14 and 15 say that if anyone is sick they must call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will restore them. James does not say that the prayer of faith will heal the sick if he has confessed his sins. He then adds that if the sick person has committed any sins, they will be forgiven.

The passage continues with verse 16:

*Therefore [because the prayer of faith will heal the sick and if the sick person has committed any sins, they will be forgiven], **confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.***

James 5:16 (NASB)

James explains that the effective *prayer* of a righteous man can accomplish much, not the *effective confession* of a sick person. Confession is not required for healing. It is the prayer of faith that makes the sick well.

MYTH 4: FAITH IS REQUIRED

If it was necessary for the sick to have faith in order to be healed, divine healing could only occur in the body of a believer. How could someone who doesn't believe in Jesus have faith to be healed by Him? Healing is not the responsibility of the sick. The reason healing and miracles accompany the preaching of the Gospel is that they are signs to unbelievers.

Furthermore, Jesus never required faith from anyone in order for them to be healed. Yes, He acknowledged it, but never required it. For example, how much faith do you think Lazarus had to be raised from the dead? None! He was dead! But that wasn't a problem because the faith requirement was not on Lazarus; it was on Jesus.

Take this story for example:

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

*"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. **But if you can do***

anything, take pity on us and help us.”

“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out.

Mark 9:21 – 26 (NIV)

“If you can” and “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief” do not indicate great faith, yet Jesus was able to heal the boy. In fact, Jesus answered the man’s prayer “help me overcome my unbelief”. If someone tells me that they don’t have enough faith to be healed, I lay hands on them because I have faith for them. The same is true for you. If you are a Christian, you have enough faith to raise the dead right now, even if you are not aware of it.

This idea that we can’t heal the sick if they lack faith comes primarily from the story in the books of Matthew and Mark describing Jesus’ visit to His hometown.

He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who

*heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." **And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.** And he marveled because of their unbelief.*

Mark 6:4 – 6 (ESV)

Some people take this passage to mean that He was unable to heal the sick because they didn't have enough faith, but that is not what is being said. First, it says that He could do no mighty works there *except* lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them. In the city of unbelief, Jesus was still able to heal the sick.

In addition, it does not say He laid hands on sick people and *healed a few of them*. It says He laid hands *on a few sick people* and healed them. Every person He laid hands on was healed. The issue is simply that He didn't lay hands on many people. When Jesus entered a town, the sick would usually be brought to Him from all over the place. When He went to His home town, however, they did not believe. As a result they didn't come to Him.

Jesus did not lack the ability to perform mighty works (as we can see by the fact that He was still able to heal the sick); He simply lacked the opportunity.



PERFORMING MIRACLES

Everything is possible for him who believes.

JESUS CHRIST



NOW THAT WE have discussed what is not required for healing, let's discuss what is. The answer is so simple that many have overlooked it in their frantic search for the magic formula.

*I tell you the truth, **anyone who has faith in me** will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

John 14:12 (NIV)

Jesus says that **anyone** who has faith in Him will do the same and greater things than He did. What sort of things did Jesus do? He healed the sick, raised the dead, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons, calmed storms, multiplied food and turned water into wine, just to name a few.

If you are born again, you have faith in Jesus and if you are alive, you fall under the category of "**anyone**." Healing is not reserved for big names and super apostles. It is for every person who has faith in Jesus, including you. You do not lack any special gift, mantle or anointing. You have everything that you need right now.

Some may argue that different parts of the body have different roles. That may be so, but we can all heal the sick and perform miracles while we fulfil those roles if we want.

PERFORMING MIRACLES

God loves people more than we could ever know. He loves them completely whether they love Him back or not. That is why he endured an horrific beating before He was crucified. He purchased our healing with the stripes on His back (Isaiah 53). Healing is an extension of His love for us. God wants people to be healed more than we want them to be healed.

As a result, there is no three-step formula or special technique that you need to know. Trying to earn a healing by doing the correct things is incredibly ineffective - healing is a gift of grace. Performing miracles is easy because it is not about what you do. It is about who you are. Healing and miracles are not “sovereign” acts of God that He performs through Christians when He is in the mood. Rather, it is Christians who perform miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. God’s sovereign act was giving us the ability to display His love to the lost and broken. You have been entrusted with power and authority through Jesus. Miracles happen when you choose to exercise that authority.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on

*earth. Go **therefore** and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

Matthew 28:18 (NASB)

We are able to “go” because Jesus has been given all authority in Heaven and earth. Doing something “in Jesus’ name” doesn’t mean attaching the phrase “in Jesus’ name” to the end of your sentence. It means that we are doing it on Jesus’ behalf, through His delegated authority. You have power through the Holy Spirit and authority through Jesus Christ. You have so much power and authority, in fact, that miracles will happen no matter what technique you use—provided you actually know about the authority you carry. I believe that this is the reason Jesus healed the sick in so many different ways. If He had always healed the sick in the same way, we would have made a theology out of it. In reality, faith is the only formula.

Here are a few examples of things that I do when healing the sick in Jesus name. I am not giving you these examples for the purpose of replication. I am giving you these examples to illustrate the principle that there is no formula.

Command

*... for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will **say to this mountain**, ‘Move*

from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Matthew 17:20 (NASB)

Jesus doesn’t say that we must pray to the Father and ask Him to move the mountain. He says that we must speak to the mountain ourselves. For example:

Back, be healed.

Cancer, leave now.

Broken bone, fuse together.

You don’t need to shout and scream at it. Your authority is the result of the finished work of Jesus, not the volume of your voice. Even a whisper is more than enough.

Act of faith

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “*Jesus, Master, have pity on us!*”

When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

Luke 17:11 – 14 (NIV)

In this story, Jesus doesn’t do anything to the men. He simply gives them something to do. I like to do something

similar. If the person has a broken arm, for example, I might draw an imaginary circle on the ground and tell them that when they step into it their arm will be healed. The same applies to any other act: Hop three times, turn around, clap your hands, say Jesus, etc.

Shadow healing

*And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least **his shadow might fall on any one of them**. Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, **and they were all being healed**.*

Acts 5:14 – 16 (NASB)

Your shadow doesn't have any substance, but you can use it to heal the sick all the same. Tell the afflicted person that when your shadow touches them they will be healed, and it will happen.

Lay hands

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their

*hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; **they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.***

Mark 16:1 – 18 (NIV)

This passage says that those who believe will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. You don't even need to say anything... Just touch the sick and they will be healed.

Faith is the only formula

I have trained many people in divine healing. To illustrate my point that there is no formula, I often have them come up with creative ways to heal the sick. On one occasion, my friend Cameron and I exchanged “healing words”. His was broccoli and mine was “egg plant”. When he administered healing to people, he would simply look at the injured body part, say “broccoli” and they would be healed. Likewise, I only used the word “egg plant” all day. Every single person who we administered healing to that day was completely restored.

Faith in the finished work of Christ is the only formula. He has already done all of the work! As a result, healing is easy. These approaches to healing are not required. They are simply examples of ways that you could choose to release the authority that you have through Christ.

COMMON MISTAKES

While there is no technique or formula required for healing the sick, there are a couple of things that I suggest avoiding. Here are some of the most common mistakes I have seen since I started teaching divine healing.

Asking God to Heal

There is no recorded incident in the Bible in which Jesus ever performed a healing or miracle by requesting it from the Father. Not once! Rather, Jesus was able to perform miracles Himself by the power and authority that was given to Him when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. Likewise, there is no recorded incident in the Bible in which the disciples performed a healing or miracle by requesting it from God. They were able to perform miracles themselves in the name of Jesus.

You don't need to ask the Father to perform miracles for you. He has asked you to perform miracles through Him. So then, who is performing the miracles? Is it you or is it God? The answer is "both." Displaying the Gospel is a team effort. Besides, you are one with God. Who can tell where you end and He begins?

Taking too long

Generally speaking, the more time you spend administering healing to someone the less faith you have for the healing. You don't need to spend 15 minutes commanding the sickness to leave before you ask the person to test it out. A couple of seconds is more than enough time. The sickness does not obey because of how much you talk. It obeys because you are doing the talking.

To clarify, if the ailment is not completely healed once you have spoken to it, speak again. I am not talking about persisting when there is no breakthrough; I am talking about your act of faith itself (the command, laying on of hands, etc.).

Basing faith on fear

It is just as easy for Jesus to heal dandruff as it is for Him to heal blindness, deafness, cancer, HIV, or anything else. When we change the way we minister healing based on our perception of the severity of the condition, we are basing our faith on fear. I have seen it a thousand times.

A group of Christians are on the streets preaching the Gospel. Someone comes up to one of them (let's call him Luke), to be healed of lower back pain. Luke lays his hands on the guys back and says "Back, be healed". The man is instantly healed and leaves happy.

Later, another man comes up to Luke, also looking for

healing in His back. He explains that his back was broken 20 years ago and that he hasn't been able to move his legs since. Luke sees the wheelchair and all of a sudden, it's game time. He takes a deep breath and then lets rip, loudly rebuking and binding everything in sight.

In this scenario, the solution was the same for both people, but Luke let fear dictate his response. We need to renew our minds to the fact that all sickness is equally easy to heal. Curry Blake rightly says, "*The only hindrance to healing is that we believe there is a hindrance.*" If we assign a difficulty rating to sickness based upon our perception of its severity, we will only be able to heal what we believe to be easy. All healing is equally easy all the time.

LETS PERFORM A MIRACLE

It is time to get activated by performing your first miracle. Throughout this chapter, we have been talking about two different displays of power: healings and miracles. If the Gospel is supposed to be preached with displays of power, both are important. If the only miracles you can perform are healings, what display of power do you offer when the person you are sharing the Gospel with doesn't have any sickness? So what we are going to do is grow someone's leg.

The purpose of this section of the book is not to convince the sceptic. It is to activate those who are actually interested in performing miracles.

To start off, go find someone on whom you can perform the miracle.



① Next, have them sit on a chair with their hips as far back as possible.



② Now, kneel in front of them and pick up their feet just behind their shoes and hold their legs straight out in front of them.



③ Use your thumb to push the sole of their shoe on to their foot. You don't want their shoe to move at all while you do this.

You can remove their shoes completely if you would prefer. I generally keep them on as it is easier to see the length difference due to the flat bottoms of the shoes. If you do decide to remove their shoes, the easiest way to see the length difference is to look at the ankle bones.



④ Now, repeat after me. “Right leg, grow in Jesus’ name”. Make sure that you do not pull on their leg. This could cause their shoe to move. Rather, push the heels of their shoes toward them using your thumb.

When you do this, you will see their right leg grow out past their left one. Feel free to grow it out as far as you want. Remember, you have been given authority through Christ. If you tell the leg to grow, it must grow.

Now let’s shrink it back to regular size. Remember what I said a bit earlier in this chapter? You don’t even have to speak in order to perform a miracle. To shrink it back, try blowing on it and it will return to normal.

Easy, wasn’t it? The only difference between growing a leg and raising the dead is the difficulty rating that we assign to it in our mind. In reality, they are equally easy. Now find someone who is suffering with sickness, pain or injury and demonstrate the Fathers love to them by setting them free.



CONCLUSION

*The Gospel is simple; it takes theologians to
complicate it.*

DEREK PRINCE



THE GOSPEL is actually extremely simple. God loved the world so much that He came in human form to die for the ungodly. He completely destroyed sin on the cross so that humanity could be set free from its corrupting power. Because of His work, freedom and salvation are available to everyone through faith. This is God's free gift to man, something that can never be bought or earned. When we receive this gift, we are totally transformed, from lost sinners to beloved sons and daughters. We are made perfect, clean, holy and righteous, freed from the power of sin and death. This is our new reality, regardless of our experiences.

As Christians, we have been brought into complete and perfect union with God; nothing that we do can get us any closer to Him than we already are. Likewise, there is nothing we can do to get more of God's love or acceptance. God is already pleased with us because of the work of His son. Our actions are simply the overflow of that reality.

We have been entrusted with the power of God to establish the realities of His kingdom on earth. We are fully

equipped to preach and display the Gospel through signs, wonders and miracles and to destroy *every* work of the devil. We do not need any additional mantle or anointing to accomplish this task because we have been given the anointing of Jesus Christ.

The finished work of Christ is exactly that—a finished work. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken away from it. The only thing that is left for us to do is get lost in the revelation of the grace of God, the finished work of Christ, and the surpassing glory of the New Covenant.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.

CONNECT WITH US

Visit us online:

www.thefinishedwork.org

TheFinishedWork.org offers a variety of resources and will allow you to get more information about our ministry and message.

Email us:

info@thefinishedwork.org

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THE FINISHED WORK

The Finished Work is a Christian ministry dedicated to spreading the true Gospel; the message of God's radical grace and the finished work of Christ. It is our conviction that a substantial portion of the modern day Church has never heard the Gospel before. As a result, we share this message, not only with unbelievers, but with believers too.

We also believe that the Church is an organism under the leadership of Christ, rather than an institution under human leadership. We are committed to our vision of seeing the Church return to its original form; fellowshiping with one another in small groups in which everyone has an opportunity to share and function as God intended.

Our website offers you the three primary benefits.

1. The Finished Work Blog

TheFinishedWork.org is the home of Ryan Sletcher's personal blog. This is a great resource for those who would like to find out more about New Covenant Christianity, the grace of God and the finished work of Christ

2. Forum and Community

Our Forum and Social Network will enable you to effectively connect with like minded Christians both in your area and around the world. Use this platform to ask questions, discuss ideas, make friends and grow together in the revelation of Christ.

3. Organic Church Listing

Our free “organic church” listing service will allow you to connect a with Christian’s who host regular meetings in your area. If you already host a regular meeting, you are able to list it for others in your community to find.

For more information, visit www.thefinishedwork.org.

Surpassing Glory offers you truth that you may never hear in church. It unapologetically challenges many of the widely accepted doctrines that exist within popular Christianity, and strips away the fluff of man-made religion to reveal a simple truth: The work of Jesus was enough. This book is an introduction to the true gospel; the good news that most Christians have never heard before.

If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.

2 Corinthians 3:9 - 10 (NIV)

"I absolutely loved reading this book! Ryan has an amazing logic and clarity about the Gospel and communicates it very simply and thoroughly. This is a must-read for anybody who does not have a clear understanding of the Finished Work of Christ and all that it entails!"

Cornel Marais

Founder of Charisma Ministries

Author of 'So You Think Your Mind Is Renewed?'



Ryan Sletcher is an ordinary Christian from Cape Town, South Africa, who is passionate about seeing power, freedom and truth restored to the Church. He is the founder of "The Finished Work"; a teaching and preaching ministry dedicated to this vision. For more information, please visit TheFinishedWork.org.

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